

THE ATLANTIC WORLD

# Dutch Atlantic Connections, 1680-1800

*Linking Empires, Bridging Borders*

*Edited by*

*Gert Oostindie & Jessica V. Roitman*



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## Dutch Atlantic Connections, 1680–1800

# Atlantic World

EUROPE, AFRICA AND THE AMERICAS, 1500–1830

*Edited by*

Benjamin Schmidt (*University of Washington*)

Wim Klooster (*Clark University*)

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*Linking Empires, Bridging Borders*

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Jessica V. Roitman



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*Gert Oostindie and Jessica Vance Roitman*



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# Introduction

*Gert Oostindie and Jessica Vance Roitman*

The historiography of the Atlantic has long dismissed its importance for the Dutch Republic. This view is summed up by the doyen of Dutch economic history, Jan de Vries, who remarked that the history of the Dutch in the Atlantic was “filled with frustration and disappointment, never resulting in a territorial, political or cultural presence that answered to the grand visions of successive generations of advocates.” Elsewhere, de Vries and his co-author, Ad van der Woude, remarked that “the 200 year history of the Dutch Atlantic economy is one of repeated cycles of hope, frustration, and failure.” De Vries and van der Woude were echoed by historian Piet Emmer, who dedicated his entire career to Dutch Atlantic history, yet nonetheless concluded that “the Dutch were not very important in that part of the world.”<sup>1</sup> However, in recent years, this dismissive historiographical tradition has been reconsidered and reevaluated.

The first challenge to this view was economic, perhaps not surprisingly given the long Dutch empirical tradition in economic history. A volume on the Dutch Atlantic edited by Victor Enthoven and Johannes Postma, *Riches from Atlantic Commerce*, asserted that the Atlantic was far more important economically than had heretofore been admitted by historians. Recent research has, indeed, produced upwards revisions of the importance of the Dutch Caribbean colonies to metropolitan trade.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, many contributions to this volume are cautiously revisionist in terms of the economic importance of the Dutch Atlantic. While the contrast between initial Dutch expectations for their Atlantic endeavors and the eventual outcomes was stark, most of the essays in this volume show, either explicitly or implicitly, that the Dutch Atlantic mattered more than was long assumed.

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- 1 Jan de Vries, “The Dutch Atlantic Economies,” in *The Atlantic Economy During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel*, ed. Peter A. Coclanis (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 1–29, 2; Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 476; P.C. Emmer, *The Dutch in the Atlantic economy, 1580–1880: trade, slavery and emancipation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 1.
  - 2 Jan de Vries, “The Limits of globalization in the early modern world,” *Economic History Review* 63, no. 3 (2010): 710–733; Victor Enthoven, “An Assessment of Dutch Transatlantic Commerce, 1585–1817,” in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585–1817*, ed. Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven, (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 385–415.

But how, exactly, did the Atlantic matter to the Dutch? And why was the Atlantic engagement of the Dutch important for the Dutch themselves, but also for all the other actors involved in the Atlantic in the early modern period? Cautious calculations of the volume of trade, and the subsequent economic impact accruing to the Dutch from their Atlantic engagements, only illustrate a fraction of the complex story – even on the economic side of things. Hence, the need for this volume bringing together the multifaceted findings of a group of experts in Atlantic history as they grappled with the difficulties in delineating the ways in which a small, highly decentralized, eminently heterogeneous European country interacted with, influenced, and was impacted by, a vast, hotly contested oceanic space over more than a century.

The contributions to this volume begin to answer the questions of how and why the Atlantic was important to the Dutch and the Dutch important to the Atlantic by utilizing approaches that privilege entanglement, connections, and interaction. In fact, one of the unifying themes to come out of the disparate essays is that trans-imperial, and the concomitant regional, connections were constitutive for the Atlantic as whole, and for the Dutch in the Atlantic specifically. Yet there is a tension that lies at the heart of many of these chapters – a tension that is evident in much of Atlantic history. This is the fact that, as much as we may acknowledge that there was room for self-organization and cross- and interimperial connections, we cannot dismiss the centrality of the metropolitan state and its institutions to how the Atlantic functioned.

### What is the “Dutch Atlantic”?

The authors of the essays in this volume almost uniformly come to the conclusion that it makes little sense to think of one integrated, much less one uniform, “Dutch Atlantic.” Even ascertaining what territories constituted the “Dutch Atlantic” is difficult in the extreme. Such a classification is dependent upon both chronology and definition. The roughest of outlines of the Dutch involvement in the Atlantic would run something like this: an ambitious start around 1600, coinciding with the triumphant phase of the Dutch revolt against the Habsburg monarchy and the rise of the Republic as the commercial center of Europe; the founding of the first Dutch West India Company (WIC), explorations, conquests both in the Americas and Africa, crowned by a significant role in the spread of the plantation complex, including African slavery, to the Caribbean. Next came a phase of geographical contraction starting in the mid-seventeenth century, which, by 1680, resulted in a modest, though enduring, Dutch Atlantic “empire” of a few scattered islands in the Caribbean

(St. Eustatius, Curaçao, Aruba, Bonaire, Saba, St. Maarten [shared with France]), some territories on the “Wild Coast” of Northeastern South America (Suriname, Essequibo, Berbice, Demerara), and the trading outpost of Elmina located on the West Coast of Africa. For the purposes of this book, this is the “Dutch Atlantic.” This choice, limiting though it may be, is based on the intertwined rationales of chronology and methodological delineations.

In terms of chronology, Dutch Atlantic history could be divided as follows. The first period extended from 1600 through the 1670s, started with scattered explorations but only got underway seriously with the establishment of the first WIC and the colonization, in this order, of New Netherland, Brazil, the Antilles and finally the Guianas. This “Dutch moment in Atlantic history” was a period of military ambitions, framed in the wider context of the Dutch Revolt against the Spanish and the ensuing short-lived Dutch hegemonic role. The second phase covers almost the entire period discussed in this book, starting circa 1680 and ending a bit more than a century later. This was a century of economic growth but also of shifts in centers of gravity within the Dutch orbit. The Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780–1784) sealed the fate not only of the Dutch Republic, but equally of its Atlantic possessions, which would never again regain their previous significance. This marks the beginning of the third phase in Dutch Atlantic history, a phase of growing insignificance.

This choice to focus on the seemingly inglorious period from 1680–1800 – a period in which the major settlement colonies of Brazil and New Netherland had already been lost, the first WIC bankrupted and the Dutch Atlantic “empire” had narrowed to some isolated fortresses in West Africa, a few nascent plantation colonies in the Guianas and six small islands in the Caribbean Sea – may seem odd, but it is in line with the overarching aims of the book. A reconsideration and reevaluation of why and how the Dutch mattered in the Atlantic and the Atlantic mattered for the Dutch requires moving beyond the glory days of Atlantic military might, expansion, and control. This story is well-known, often repeated, and the answers to the questions are clear.<sup>3</sup> What is less clear, and what the chapters in this book help illuminate, is how and why the Dutch managed to maintain modest economic growth, and a limited, though visible, political, intellectual, and cultural presence in the Atlantic against a backdrop

3 See Gert Oostindie and Jessica Vance Roitman, “Repositioning the Dutch in the Atlantic, 1680–1800,” *Itinerario* 36, no. 2 (2012): 129–160; Piet Emmer and Jos Gommans, *Rijk aan het eind van de wereld: de geschiedenis van Nederland overzee, 1600–1800* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2013) and Wim Klooster, *The Dutch Moment in Atlantic History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), forthcoming.



of the geographic contraction of their Atlantic territories, economic stagnation and decline in the metropole, and dwindling naval might.

This decision to center the studies in this book on the territories remaining to the Dutch after 1680 was compelled not only by chronological boundaries, but also by related methodological and definitional rationales. Our narrowly defined Dutch Atlantic was composed of the places colonized and ruled by representative institutions of the Dutch Republic. From the 1680s until the late eighteenth century, Elmina and the Antillean islands were administered directly by the WIC, Suriname by the *Sociëteit van Suriname* in which the WIC participated, and Berbice and Essequibo (and its dependency Demerara) in various ad hoc arrangements.<sup>4</sup> The political and institutional contours of the Dutch Atlantic remained stable throughout the chronology of the book and nothing more would be added or ceded to this empire until the Napoleonic Wars.

Defining the Dutch Atlantic, at least during the period from 1680–1800, as being bounded by territories under the political and institutional control of representatives of the Dutch Republic is clear, simple and straightforward. But it is not without conceptual limitations. After all, the cultural staying power of “Dutch New York” (the former colony of New Netherland taken over by the English in 1664) was impressive.<sup>5</sup> Many Dutch residents stayed in the colony after it was ceded to the English.<sup>6</sup> As late as 1790 (the date of the first US census), about 100,000 Americans (or roughly 3.4 percent of the total population) were of (distant) Dutch descent.<sup>7</sup> In fact, during the debate about the American

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4 The only relevant institutional changes over time were the definitive loss of monopoly rights retained by the WIC in the 1730s and the Company's collapse and liquidation in 1792. There were changes in practical policies over time, in particular the acknowledgement that a comprehensive mercantilist policy was neither feasible nor rewarding. Hence, the early seventeenth century decision to make Curaçao a free trade zone for both legal and illicit trade was followed by the development of St. Eustatius as a Northern equivalent in the 1740s. Metropolitan policies for the Guianas retained more of a mercantilist character, but even here metropolitan decision-making allowed for an opening up of trade to the British Atlantic colonies in the early eighteenth century.

5 See Joyce Goodfriend, ed., *Revisiting New Netherland: Perspectives on Early Dutch America* (Leiden: Brill, 2005) and Russell Shorto, *The Island at the Center of the World: The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan and the Forgotten Colony That Shaped America* (New York: Doubleday, 2004).

6 In 1700, this number would have been only 8650. See Henry S. Lucas, *Netherlanders in America: Dutch Immigration to the United States and Canada, 1789–1950* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1955).

7 <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab02.txt>. Jaap Jacobs points out that this number is possibly misleading as it may have included descendants of

Constitution in 1788, a translation of the draft proposal was printed in Dutch in Albany, which had, at the time, 17.5 percent of the population who claimed Dutch ancestry.<sup>8</sup> This would seem to show that Dutch, in some form or another, was still used widely enough to necessitate this translation. And the Dutch Reformed Church in America continued to use Dutch liturgical forms throughout the eighteenth century, and did not gain independence from the Amsterdam classis until 1772 – over a century after the colony became English.

But, as Jaap Jacobs cogently points out, this persistence of Dutch religious, material culture (such as jambless fireplaces in New York colonial homes) and linguistic forms had far more to do with the dynamic of otherness in the colony than it did with any inherent adherence to, or affiliation with, the Netherlands per se. The colonial Dutch were defined by the English as being Dutch and came to define themselves through this prism. Thus, this fascinating endurance of Dutch culture was less about Dutch institutions or links with the Dutch Republic and more about identification over and against an “other” on a daily basis.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, as Jacobs also points out, there is a tendency to oversimplify and mythologize the maintenance of Dutch cultural forms in North America, and, thereby, to assume an unbroken link from past to present when, in fact, Dutch culture in North America was in an ongoing state of change and (re) creation.<sup>10</sup> This, of course, does not mean that it could not or should not be included in a study of the Dutch Atlantic, but, coupled with the fact that it was not under Dutch political rule between 1680–1800, it falls outside the purview of this book.

There was a similar dynamic of a persistence of Dutch cultural forms in the Cape Colony, which also falls outside the scope of our book, but for different reasons. For instance, Theodore Roosevelt (one of the most famous Americans of Dutch descent) could exchange Dutch nursery rhymes with the Afrikaners on his trip to South Africa in 1909.<sup>11</sup> Colonized by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in 1652, over the next century and a half the Cape Colony developed into the one real settler colony in the Dutch colonial orbit, populated by some 20,000 Europeans by the late eighteenth century. As a midway point between

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Germans or Scandinavians who had gradually come to identify as culturally Dutch, at least partially through intermarriage with Dutch families. This number is also well below that of the English, Scots, Irish, and Germans. See his *The Colony of New Netherland: A Dutch Settlement in Seventeenth-Century America* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009), 252.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., 254–255.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

the Republic and the Dutch settlements in Asia, the colony provided indispensable provisions and maritime facilities to the VOC fleet. The Cape Colony developed into a hub in a commercial and migratory web linking it to Europe and even more to Asia. The thriving trade included captives brought in to perform various types of work, though not in export-driven plantation agriculture. Some slaves were brought in from Madagascar and Mozambique, though the great majority came from Asia. The local Khoikhoi population was subjugated, driven further inland and made peripheral, both demographically and socially. Thus, the VOC developed the Southern tip of Africa into a place largely disconnected from the sub-Saharan part of the continent that was fundamental to the creation of the early modern Atlantic world.

Recent scholarly work aims to demonstrate “how Cape Town both shaped and was shaped by the wider Indian Ocean world,” rather than exclusively or even predominantly by the Dutch.<sup>12</sup> Very early on, certain Asian luxury goods shipped by the VOC via the Cape Colony to the Republic were re-exported by Dutch merchants to Atlantic markets. In contrast to the Spanish bullion trade, however, this Asian-Atlantic trade was of little economic importance and certainly did not produce significant integration of these various markets.<sup>13</sup> Although further research could demonstrate heretofore unacknowledged links between the Cape Colony and the Dutch Atlantic territories between 1680–1800, the current state of the art does not justify including the Cape Colony and its marginal links to the Dutch Atlantic in this book.<sup>14</sup>

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12 Nigel Worden, *Cape Town between east and west: Social identities in a Dutch colonial town* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2012), xiii, referring to Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: forced migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

13 Deborah L. Krohn, Marybeth De Filippis, and Peter Miller, *Dutch New York, between East and West: The World of Margrieta van Varick* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

14 Likewise, we follow the practice among historians of the Dutch Atlantic not to include North Atlantic fisheries in our analysis of the Dutch Atlantic. The WIC was not actively involved in the business of Dutch whaling and other fishing exploits in the Northern Atlantic, although whaling ships occasionally anchored off St. Eustatius. More broadly, these endeavors, certainly after the latter part of the seventeenth century, only marginally linked up with Dutch commercial networks to the South in the Atlantic, rarely or never included Africa, and did not involve Dutch colonization or governance. Christiaan van Bochove, “De Hollandse haringvisserij tijdens de vroegmoderne tijd,” *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 1, no. 1 (2004): 3–17; Christiaan van Bochove and Jan Luiten van Zanden, “Two Engines of Early Modern Economic Growth? Herring Fisheries and Whaling during the Dutch Golden Age (1600–1800),” in *Ricchezza del mare, ricchezza dal mare. Secoli XIII–SVIII*, ed. Somonetta Cavaciocchi (Prato, 2006), 557–574; Jan de Vries

If, as we have discussed above, defining what territories constituted the “Dutch Atlantic” is conceptually tricky, getting a handle on what, if any, characteristics could be said to define the Dutch Atlantic and its relations to a wider Atlantic world is also somewhat fraught. Nevertheless, as the chapters in this book will illustrate, there are four broad and overarching features that seem to be indicative of the Dutch Atlantic writ large. First, there is the exceptional economic heterogeneity and openness of the Dutch Atlantic “empire.” In the Republic, it was mainly the two coastal provinces (Holland and Zeeland) that participated in the Atlantic economy, and the dominance of Amsterdam was evident as the center holding the entire Dutch Atlantic together. In Africa, there was no such thing as Dutch colonization except for a handful of fortresses in and around Elmina, perhaps better defined as tolerated by, rather than imposed upon, local rulers. The trade in enslaved people soon dominated the African side of the Dutch Atlantic, but there was no question of a Dutch metropolitan or Caribbean control over the conditions or supply of captives. In the Caribbean, the Dutch-owned territories were either plantation colonies operated as much as possible along mercantilist lines, or, conversely, as free trade centers which thrived by undermining the larger powers’ mercantilist systems.

The connections between the Guianas and the Antilles were remarkably weak. In contrast, not only Curaçao and St. Eustatius, but also the plantation colonies were intimately linked to other empires – though, for the Guianas, this was predominantly to (British) North America only. Crucially important for the functioning of this Dutch Atlantic economy was the geopolitical setting. An increasingly weak naval power, the Republic could not guarantee the protection of its colonies and commercial networks in times of international war and was, therefore, critically dependent on conditions of peace or, conversely, on the willingness of France, Spain and, particularly, Great Britain to respect Dutch neutrality in times of war.

Secondly, and linked to this economic heterogeneity, was the remarkable variety of institutional arrangements, in sharp contrast to the monopoly on Dutch trading and governance exercised by the VOC in Asia and the Cape, but also different from the more uniform Atlantic arrangements imposed by the other European powers. While the WIC governed the Antilles and Elmina, various semi-public bodies governed the Guianas. Likewise, trade arrangements varied, but the WIC failed to ensure a lasting monopoly, to the benefit of both the other semi-public institutions in the Guianas and private merchants

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and Ad van der Woude, *First Modern Economy*, 267; Paul Butel, *The Atlantic* (London: Routledge, 1999), 95.

and financiers. As for governance, within the Republic, the States General, the WIC with its varying provincial Chambers (dominated by Amsterdam and, at times, the Stadtholder) all had their own stakes and claims in the Atlantic. The resulting condition of perpetual contestation of authority was typical of the Dutch Republic and influenced the emergence of a West Indian interest group. In the Atlantic, this decentralized governance structure allowed for a significant variety in governmental policies and practices, not to mention causing constant bickering over the distribution of military costs and economic gains.

A third defining characteristic pertains to the patterns of migration and identity formation. The Dutch Atlantic's heterogeneity was vitally linked to migration patterns which, in turn, reflected the natural resources overseas and the economic and governance decisions made in the Republic. Because the Guianas were developed as plantation colonies and expanded almost permanently, over 90 percent of their populations were slaves, either enslaved Africans or, increasingly, their Creole descendants. In the major Antillean islands, the share of the enslaved population was considerably lower and demographic creolization proceeded at a higher pace. Although the Amerindian population living under Dutch rule was likely quite low (reliable figures are lacking), they played a vital role in maintaining Dutch control on the Guianas.<sup>15</sup> European migration was characterized by an exceptional diversity in the origin of these immigrants. Large portions of the European settlers originated not in the Dutch Republic, but in Germany, the Iberian peninsula,

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15 See the work of Neil Whitehead, "Carib Ethnic Soldiering in Venezuela, the Guianas, and the Antilles, 1492–1820," *Ethnohistory* 37, no. 4 (1990): 357–385; "Ethnic Transformation and Historical Discontinuity in Native Amazonia and Guyana, 1500–1900," *L'Homme* 126–128 (1993): 292–293; *Lords of the Tiger Spirit: A History of the Caribs in Colonial Venezuela and Guyana, 1498–1820* (Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Foris, 1988); "Native Peoples Confront Colonial Regimes in Northeastern South America (c. 1500–1900)" in *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas*, ed. Frank Salomon and Stuart Schwartz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 382–442 and Marjoleine Kars, "Cleansing the Land': Dutch-Amerindian Cooperation in the Suppression of the 1763 Slave Rebellion in Dutch Guiana," in *Empires and Indigenes: Intercultural Alliance, Imperial Expansion, and Warfare in the Early Modern World*, ed. Wayne E. Lee (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 251–275. For two excellent studies which illustrate the importance of Dutch-Indigenous Alliances for the Dutch empire, see Mark Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade: Dutch-Indigenous Alliances in the Atlantic World, 1595–1674* (Leiden: Brill, 2011) and "The Opportunities and Limits of Ethnic Soldiering: the Tupis and the Dutch-Portuguese Struggle for the Southern Atlantic, 1630–1657," in *Empires and Indigenes*, 193–220. These studies are outside the chronology of the present volume.

the British isles, France, Scandinavia, or elsewhere, and brought their own languages and religions.

Facing a dearth in the local Dutch supply of migrants, no attempt was made to keep the Atlantic colonies either fully Dutch by nationality or language. Nevertheless, there was certainly an imperative to maintain at least a nominally Dutch Reformed presence in the colonies, despite the diversity of the populations in these territories.<sup>16</sup> Toleration of other religions was neither so clear-cut nor so self-evident in the Dutch Atlantic territories as later myths might lead one to believe.<sup>17</sup> Yet, in addition to the Lutheran, Moravian, and various other Protestant groups in the Dutch colonies, the vast majority of the free colored population of Curaçao was Catholic, and the arrival of priests from the mainland of South America to serve this population was condoned. Particularly striking is the large proportion of Jewish settlers in the major Caribbean colonies, a presence which not only helped the Dutch Atlantic to tap into important commercial networks, but which also shaped specific processes of creolization within the Jewish community and beyond. With the exception of the post-1654 exodus from Brazil, there was little European migration between the Dutch Atlantic colonies, again undermining the idea of the Dutch Atlantic empire as a cohesive unit. The cosmopolitan character of the white population in the separate Dutch Caribbean colonies occasionally gave rise to questions about identities and collective loyalties to the Republic. On a practical level, in the overseas Dutch Atlantic, the Dutch language was spoken by only a tiny minority, and the two major Creole languages that emerged had no Dutch vocabulary, but rather English (Sranan Tongo in Suriname) or Portuguese/Spanish (Papiamentu in Curaçao).

Fourthly, and obviously connected to the bifurcation in the economic models the Dutch employed, slavery regimes varied considerably, and so did slave resistance. Ironically, slavery was not a dominant institution in Elmina. In Curaçao and possibly also in St. Eustatius, a great deal of slave work was not in

16 See the work of Evan Haefeli, *New Netherland and the Dutch Origins of American Religious Liberty* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Jaap Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland*, 144–179 and Danny Noorlander, “Serving God and Mammon: The Reformed Church and the Dutch West India Company in the Atlantic World, 1621–1674” (unpublished PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2011) for more information about the complex dynamic between toleration and the assertion of the primacy of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Atlantic colonies.

17 Even the much-discussed Jewish population in the Dutch Atlantic territories experienced both official and unofficial persecution. See Jessica Vance Roitman, “Creating Confusion in the Colonies: Jews, Citizenship, and the Dutch and British Atlantics,” *Itinerario* 36, no. 2 (August 2012): 55–90.

agriculture but rather in the urban domestic and particularly the commercial and maritime sectors, and here the division between free and enslaved labor became increasingly blurred. Of course, the slavery regime in the Guianas, quintessential plantation economies, was far more typical of slavery elsewhere in plantation America. Slave resistance, on the other hand, resulted in the truly extraordinary development of substantial maroon communities in Suriname's tropical rain forest, eventually recognized by Dutch authorities who lacked the means to contain this menace to the colony otherwise. Internal marronage was not an option on the Lesser Antilles, but there was some maritime marronage from Curaçao to the Spanish Main. On the other hand, and perhaps in contrast to the long-held idea that slavery in Curaçao was relatively mild, the island had several slave revolts. The uprising in 1795, in reaction to the Haitian Revolution, was among the most significant in the late eighteenth century Caribbean.

All the contributions to this volume speak, in one way or another, to these characteristics of heterogeneity and diversity in economics, institutional governance systems, and slavery regimes, as well as in the composition of the populations and their respective processes of identity formation in the territories under Dutch rule. Furthermore, the various chapters all acknowledge that the Dutch-controlled part of the Atlantic could only develop by developing strong trans-imperial connections, which in turn contributed to the further economic and cultural expansion of the Atlantic world at large. The essays reinforce the importance of both interimperial encounters and of regional connections which, certainly in the Caribbean, were really one and the same. Thus, the chapters in this volume emphasize that these trans-imperial connections were visible on the economic level, but also in the interpersonal sphere. These essays are informed by the search for trans-imperial dynamics – an acknowledgement of the tension between the individual, the network, the regional, and the (inter)national. This basically reflects the state of the art in the writing of Atlantic history today, where the study of individual territories and sub-empires is increasingly framed in a larger comparative and interdisciplinary framework.

### **Bridging Borders, Linking Empires**

Wim Klooster's piece on "Curaçao as a Transit Center to the Spanish Main and the French West Indies" is centered on the connections between three imperial actors in the Caribbean – the Dutch, the Spanish, and the French. Klooster argues that the main commercial development in eighteenth century Curaçao

was the intensification of contacts with the French Caribbean. This is an important point that has been ignored in the historiography of the island, which generally emphasizes the role Curaçao played as a gateway to the Spanish American markets, particularly on the Venezuelan coast in the cacao trade, or else, to a lesser extent, focuses on the importance of North American merchants and English subjects residing on the island for the provision of desperately needed foodstuffs to the colony. Klooster summarizes this research on the Spanish and North American trades in his chapter, but particularly takes his readers beyond these relatively well-trodden paths.

Klooster shows how merchants in metropolitan Dutch ports and their correspondents on the island itself capitalized on the vast quantities of sugar, coffee, and indigo produced on Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Saint-Domingue. Curaçaoan merchants found an additional niche in the seemingly mundane mule trade. Mules were vital to the functioning of the sugar plantations on the French islands, and Curaçaoan merchants used their already-established contacts on the Spanish Main to ship these beasts to the French colonies where the market seemed nearly insatiable. There was also a voracious market for slaves on the French islands, especially in Saint-Domingue – a market the Curaçaoan merchants were happy to feed. What also comes to the fore in Klooster's essay is the pervasive tension between attempts at mercantilist control versus free trade. He shows that the traders of Curaçao were continually evading other empire's trade restrictions, whether on the Spanish mainland or on the British and French sugar islands – and found willing partners there.

Christian Koot's work on "Anglo-Dutch Trade in the Chesapeake and the British Caribbean, 1621–1733" reinforces these points about the tension between mercantilist control and free trade. His piece emphasizes the role of personal connections between Dutch and English traders in the Chesapeake and British Caribbean in creating long-lasting and durable commercial networks that transcended national boundaries. These personal, cross-national, relationships were also important in shaping British colonists' perceptions of, and reactions to, their own role within the increasingly mercantilist empire. He shows how Dutch and British settlers were allies in circumventing British trade rules for much of the seventeenth century, until their interests began to diverge in the early eighteenth century. Koot argues that Dutch trade, especially in the Chesapeake and the British Caribbean, was important to the early development of British colonies and, thus, the British Atlantic, which highlights the centrality of interimperial contacts in shaping the Atlantic.

Koot asserts that Dutch trade mattered in shaping an understanding of the evolution of the British Atlantic both because it aided economic development at the fringes of the empire and also because it shaped the political economy



of that empire. To support his arguments, Koots' essay examines the extent and scope of Anglo-Dutch colonial exchange, the ways Dutch and British merchants transacted business, the networks they constructed, and the colonial nodal points where trade was based. Koot pays special attention to the legal and political structures that allowed this trade to flourish and, eventually, to wither. His essay demonstrates that British colonists pivoted towards driving their own intercolonial trade in the eighteenth century, as well as that British planters' embrace of mercantilist policies that protected their interests in the West Indies and Chesapeake should, according to Koot, remind scholars that the politics of empire always mattered in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In his chapter on Paramaribo, Karwan Fatah-Black similarly acknowledges the importance of personal relationships in his discussion of the ways in which settlers helped intensify interregional and interimperial connections. For instance, healthy colonists were an important "commodity," especially colonists who had survived a year in the tropics, and Fatah-Black details how interimperial conflicts arose between the Dutch and the English over retaining such colonists. He also shows how the migration of Jews to Suriname from Barbados, and, after Zeeland's take-over in the 1660s, back from Suriname to Barbados created ties between the two colonies – ties that were largely outside of the control of the government officials and were of vital importance to the functioning of trade in the colony.

Fatah-Black argues that intercolonial networks, most of which were based on circuits of exchange outside the control of the Suriname Company, which governed the territory, were constitutive for the colony. He shows that, over the course of the eighteenth century, Dutch colonists and North-American merchants found ways to cooperate and circumvent the rules and regulations issued from Amsterdam and London. In fact, he asserts that not a single Dutch Guianese settlement would have grown and blossomed without creating ties to other non-Dutch colonies and relying on the resources available under the formal rule of other empires and states operating in the Americas. Importantly, Fatah-Black challenges the assumption of a unique Dutch intermediary function in the Atlantic by confirming the research of Johannes Postma, which posited a world of connections operated by non-Dutch ships and non-Dutch merchants.

This world of connections led to constant tensions between attempts to assert mercantilist control in Suriname, over and against settlers' desires for greater flexibility and freedom to conduct their own trade on their own terms. While Curaçao and St. Eustatius were largely free of these mercantilist restrictions, metropolitan policies for the Guianas retained more of a mercantilist

character. As Fatah-Black discusses, metropolitan decision-making still allowed for an opening up of trade to the British Atlantic colonies in the early eighteenth century. Despite this opening up of trade with the British Atlantic colonies, Fatah-Black also notes the divergence in interests between the English and the Dutch remarked upon by Koot.

This underlines that the politics of empire always mattered in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This is a point also brought up by Henk den Heijer, who studies petitions made by merchants engaged in the West Indies trade. Den Heijer asserts that these petitions demonstrate that merchants were continuously working, in varying alliances, to defend their West Indian trade interests via the States General. The States General, in turn, were usually willing to grant these requests because they too had an interest in the continuity of Atlantic shipping and trade, even if the financial resources they could provide were limited. Den Heijer's chapter illustrates, again, the constant tension between individual actors, consortiums of merchants operating within various networks, and the effect of metropolitan policies on the Dutch Atlantic colonies.

Kenneth Morgan's essay "Anglo-Dutch Economic Relations in the Atlantic World, 1688–1783" pays special attention to the legal and political structures that allowed trade between the Dutch and the English to flourish and eventually, as noted by Fatah-Black and Koot, to wither. Morgan examines some of the underlying economic mechanisms between European powers in the Atlantic. Morgan's research validates and reinforces the assertion of other scholars that the Dutch supported Britain's public credit by significant amounts of investment in the British national debt. Morgan's work goes on to show that the Dutch contributed financially to the strength of public credit in Britain and, thereby, assisted in the British attempt to stave off the rivalry of the French in the eighteenth century Atlantic trading world.

Morgan also underscores the well-studied point that Anglo-Dutch economic connections were extensive in the Atlantic world between the so-called "Glorious Revolution" in England (1688) and the American Revolution (1776). Morgan repeats the point that, despite the English takeover of New Netherland, the merchants of New York continued to have an important Dutch component until at least the American War of Independence. This meant that trade between New York and other English territories, especially in the Caribbean, had a significant Dutch influence between 1689 and 1776.

Morgan reemphasizes the important role played by Curaçao and St. Eustatius as transit points for the international exchange of goods and how this served Anglo-Dutch economic relations in a mutually beneficial way, a role also discussed in Wim Klooster's essay. Moreover, Dutch smuggling to

North America, in defiance of mercantilist restrictions, demonstrated the links between Dutch and Anglophone merchants as part of the Atlantic trading system, a point mirrored in the work of Koot and Fatah-Black. In addition, Morgan makes the new point that Bermuda's merchants and mariners found a significant outlet for their maritime activities through commercial contacts with Dutch Caribbean islands in yet another example of the importance of interimperial contacts. Lastly, Morgan addresses the issue of these sorts of so-called "leaks" in the mercantilist system. His contribution shows how important this porousness of the mercantilist systems of Britain and France were, and how well-situated the Dutch were to take advantage of these seemingly necessary escape valves in imperial systems.

Silvia Marzagalli's work on "The French Atlantic and the Dutch, Late Seventeenth-Late Eighteenth century" also grapples with the necessity of "escape values" in the mercantilist system. Her contribution reinforces the importance of porousness in the mercantilist systems of Britain and France and shows how the Dutch were centrally placed to profit from holes in these systems. Marzagalli also shows how the exclusion of the Dutch from direct trade to French America was less effective in wartime, when French colonies were opened up to trade by neutral parties such as the Dutch. More significantly for Marzagalli's argument, the exclusive colonial system created by France was viable in the long run only if some mechanisms compensated for the structural unbalance of trade it generated. She believes that the Dutch trade with France and its Atlantic colonies are a case study for testing the hypothesis that war played a central role in the viability of the French Atlantic system.

Her work details the ways in which the Dutch played a role in the emergence and viability of French colonial trade from the second part of the seventeenth century up to the French Revolution. This role evolved over time. Whereas Dutch capital proved essential in the rise of French-based shipping to the West Indies, the Dutch were, thereafter, essential mainly in organizing a flourishing re-export trade of colonial goods from the French ports to the Netherlands on Dutch ships. The point that underlies Marzagalli's essay is that the French colonial trade originated, flourished and persisted only through the collaboration of non-French merchants and the existence of non-French markets, among which the Dutch and the Netherlands were a relevant element, though no longer the most dynamic as time passed. Her essay also reinforces the importance of metropolitan policies. She emphasizes the importance of European states in defining identities and citizenships – definitions which played a huge role in determining who could and could not participate in colonial trade.

Marzagalli's conclusions are echoed in Ana Crespo Solana's "A Network-Based Merchant Empire: Dutch Trade in the Hispanic Atlantic context

(1680–1740)” in which the issue of citizenship is of major importance. Crespo Solano discusses the various means for determining who could become naturalized and thereby participate in Spain’s trade with the Americas. Specifically, she looks at the ways the Flemish and Dutch immigrants to Cádiz maintained their own identities, manifested in their merchant networks, while also belonging to the larger Spanish empire. She explores this topic in order to illustrate how Spain depended on foreigners to conduct its trade with the Americas.

Using a case study of the Dutch and Flemish “nations” in the city of Cádiz, Crespo Solana demonstrates that through family and “nation”-based networks, these Dutch and Flemish merchants played a vital role in the American trade based in Cádiz. These trans-imperial networks of Dutch and Flemish merchants help Crespo Solana make her case that the Spanish empire was a truly multinational undertaking since its inception in the fifteenth century, and was involved in a process of what might be termed internationalization that only intensified in the latter part of the seventeenth through the mid-eighteenth century with the active participation of these Dutch and Flemish Cádiz-based networks.

Victor Wilson and Han Jordaán’s work on “The Eighteenth-century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports in the Northeastern Caribbean: Continuity and Change,” is, by its very nature, a study of cross-imperial connections and emphasizes what a truly multinational undertaking Atlantic engagement was. Wilson and Jordaán argue that the commercial networks on these small Danish, Dutch, and Swedish islands were operated similarly, despite belonging to different European empires. They demonstrate that merchants based on these islands often had contacts in all three free ports, due to their proximity to each other as well as to the existing regional systems of trade. These examples show that the merchant communities of these small and relatively obscure islands formed part of a complicated and eminently trans-imperial network that extended to neighboring colonies as well as to various countries in Europe directly.

Yet as self-organized and trans-imperial as these networks were, imperial policies were certainly influential, if not determinate. In fact, as Jordaán and Wilson argue, the experience of Dutch free trade informed and influenced Danish and Swedish colonial policy towards the creation of their own free ports of St. Barthélemy and St. Thomas to a considerable extent. And wars were turning points in the Dutch Atlantic – turning points which ruptured interimperial networks. Jordaán and Wilson insist upon the importance of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780–1784) as the beginning of the end for the Dutch in the Atlantic. As Jordaán and Wilson note, one critical component had been lost in this war for the Dutch: neutrality in international conflicts. Beginning in 1793

the Dutch were involved in two decades of almost continuous warfare. The Fourth Anglo-Dutch War was, for example, the death knell to St. Eustatius' role as regional market, and, hence, the impetus for emigration from the island. For St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy the decline of the Dutch colonies, which began as a consequence of the war, had a lasting impact. Immigration from St. Eustatius to the Danish and Swedish free ports increased and helped spur on an admittedly brief economic boom.

In this vein, Gert Oostindie argues in his piece "Dutch Atlantic Decline During 'The Age of Revolutions'" that, as important as all these aspects of law, politics, and governance were, it was ultimately war, peace, and neutrality that were central to the course of the Dutch in the Atlantic between 1680 and 1800. As Oostindie shows, the Republic, by scale and military and naval power no match for the major Atlantic players, had used its neutrality to build itself a niche as a broker greasing the mercantilist system. The decentralized fiscal system of the Dutch Republic, coupled with the relative weakness of the Dutch navy, meant that the Republic became dependent upon its neutrality vis-à-vis Britain for its Atlantic trade to function between 1689 and 1783. This neutrality was, to a large extent, predicated upon the fiscal-military strength of Britain, which protected Anglo-Dutch commercial endeavors from enemy incursion. He shows how the years between 1780–1815 taught the Dutch the lesson that a weak state's neutrality lasts only as long as larger states condone it. Oostindie argues that, after 1815, in the emerging post-mercantile Atlantic, there was no longer a need for trade zones such as Curaçao or St. Eustatius at all, and no need for illicit connections on the margins of mercantilism, so the very issue of neutrality became insignificant. The imperfect monopolies of the West Indian companies were challenged and broken, eventually giving way to direct Dutch state control of colonial affairs.

Oostindie goes on to show that the changes that really mattered in the Dutch Atlantic – abolition, geographical contraction, the loss of the brokerage function – were all externally imposed by other empires, mostly the British, and grudgingly taken on in the Netherlands and by the local elites in the colonies. His findings reinforce those of the other authors in the volume who assert the importance of metropolitan policies, the imposition of legal and institutional regimes in the Atlantic, and the centrality of war, peace, and neutrality in the functioning of Atlantic systems, even while acknowledging the importance of personal, cross-imperial connections that often circumvented the restrictions placed upon them by governments.

Piet Emmer's chapter on "The Rise and Decline of the Dutch Atlantic, 1600–1800" addresses some of the same themes that concern Oostindie such as why and how the Dutch empire in the Atlantic, which had managed to maintain

itself and even grow modestly economically, declined. Emmer argues for both internal and external factors. The fact that the Dutch were unable to hold on to one or more large-scale settlement colonies was due to an external factor: the lack of naval power. Even France, a much larger, more powerful and more populous country than the Netherlands, lost its settlement colony in North America, albeit a century later than the Dutch. However, the declining Dutch share in the Atlantic trade was caused by an internal factor: the relative decline in the productivity of Dutch trade and shipping. That is why the Dutch share in the trade in goods and slaves to non-Dutch colonies diminished relative to that of its competitors in areas where protective legislation hardly made the difference. It also explains why the Dutch were unable to profit commercially from the opening up of Latin America and relied heavily on protectionist legislation in order to prevent being outcompeted by British and US firms in the trade and shipping to their own colonies. Trade barriers, the much-hated stumbling block for Dutch expansion in the seventeenth century, had, Emmer writes, become a protective wall.

The contributions discussed so far emphasize the political and economic nature of linkages from and to the Dutch Atlantic. But it was not just in the economic and political arenas that trans-imperial connections were of great importance. Karel Davids challenges existing historiography and shows that the evolution of knowledge networks in the North Atlantic in the eighteenth century was a more complex affair than an exercise with merely two teams: the British and the American colonials, as it is so often depicted. Players on both sides of the Atlantic not only entertained bilateral relations but often corresponded with people in more than one region at the same time. Multilateral relationships were by no means uncommon. And these sorts of relationships developed not just between actors based in Britain, the Continent and the British American colonies, but also between American colonials or European continentals and people living in South America, notably in the Dutch Guianas. During the course of the eighteenth century, networks of knowledge thus cut right across different imperial spaces. Thus, the scholarly Atlantic transcended boundaries between the British, Dutch, French or Spanish Atlantics.

The Dutch academics or members of learned societies Karel Davids studied were aware of the West Indies, and played a central role in the emergence and evolution of scholarly networks of knowledge. They communicated with each other through written correspondence and journals of a scholarly or general nature about these territories. This was a small group of people whose interest in, and knowledge of, the Dutch Atlantic possessions was not quickly, easily, or widely disseminated to the general populace. But, as Davids admits, colonial possessions were not a *sine qua non* for Dutch actors to play a part in flows of

knowledge. Cross-Atlantic networks of knowledge emerged and evolved in part independently of the existence of colonial empires. What Davids demonstrates, then, is that while the Atlantic, in general, figured in literate circuits, and the Dutch Atlantic territories mattered for it, there was no specific recognition or understanding of a Dutch Atlantic *per se*.

Jessica Roitman and Aviva Ben-Ur's chapter "Adultery Here and There: Crossing Sexual Boundaries in the Dutch Jewish Atlantic" also looks at the pre-eminent importance of information flows. They, too, show how information flowed back and forth between the Amsterdam Jewish community and its "daughter" communities in the Dutch colonies of Curaçao and Suriname, and demonstrate through the lens of specific cases of legal and social transgressions the reciprocal cultural and legal influence the Jewish communities in the colonies had on the Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam. This is a different take on linkages and connections than the economic and political one taken by most of the other chapters, but the dynamics are the same. Roitman and Ben-Ur look at the interplay of, and tensions between, the multiple strands of law – Jewish, Dutch metropolitan, and Dutch law as actually practiced in the colonies – under which Jewish communities in Dutch territories lived. In their study, they look at particular incidents of adultery, a crime under Dutch civil, Christian, and Jewish law, and how this crime was dealt with. Interwoven in their story is a discussion of how these legal systems impacted the surrounding enslaved, Eurafrikan, and free black populations.

Ben-Ur and Roitman's essay on Portuguese Jewish communities in Curaçao and Suriname approaches issues such as the maintenance of communal boundaries, relations across and between religious and ethnic boundaries, and the creation of a creolized society. By focusing on a highly mobile, diasporic, and, by its very nature, trans-imperial community within the Dutch Atlantic, Ben-Ur and Roitman bring to the fore the importance of identification, affiliation, and, importantly, demographics. And, as was the case in both Marzagalli and Crespo Solana's essays, the definition of identities and citizenship is an underlying theme in the chapter. Citizenship status was of particular importance to the Jewish population in the Dutch Atlantic, which often had to fight to assert its rights to settle and trade in the region, despite the liberal privileges extended by the Dutch authorities.

Identification, or lack thereof, is a theme also picked up in Benjamin Schmidt's chapter "The 'Dutch' 'Atlantic' and the Dubious Case of Frans Post." Schmidt makes the case that the Dutch served as entrepreneurs of exoticism, manufacturing products that, first, tended to *dilute* the distinct parts of the world, mix and match geographic spaces, and highlight the bits and pieces of the world that seemed vaguely "exotic" rather than particular to this or that

national interest. This meant that these products tended to efface as much as possible the Dutch presence overseas in order to create books and pictures depicting an exotic world that appealed not particularly to a Dutch, but to a broadly European audience. They abnegated any sense of their *own* (Dutch) colonial and imperial presence – which, by this period, were but poor reflections of the imperial profiles of Spain, Britain, and France – preferring to promote a kind of hyper-imperial or pan-colonial *European* sensibility. They invented, thus, not only an exotic subject but also a European consumer of the exotic world. And this means, according to Schmidt, that there is no distinctly *Dutch* Atlantic in these sources so much as a generically “European” “exotic” world, behind which, to be sure, stood numerous entrepreneurial Dutch ateliers. What Schmidt demonstrates, then, is that while the Atlantic, in general, figured in literate circuits, the Dutch Atlantic, specifically, was of limited significance, an idea also echoed in Davids’ essay.

Alison Games summarizes the essays in the book in the final chapter and emphasizes the underlying narratives that emerge in the collection – the international orientation of the Dutch Atlantic as seen in settlement patterns and language, the important economic ties the Dutch forged (as middlemen, as traders, as brokers, as inhabitants of trade entrepôts) with other polities and people, and its decentralization. Games also contextualizes the essays in this book within trends in Atlantic history. Atlantic historiography is moving away from national or imperial perspectives and is taking a transnational and global turn. As Games points out, transnational themes have special salience for the Dutch, with their global enterprises in this era, and in light of their greater financial success in the East Indies. Games goes to say that the Dutch Atlantic might be even more important to Atlantic history than it is to the history of the Netherlands. A study of the Dutch in the Atlantic world reveals just the kind of Atlantic history that people have been calling for – entangled, international, multilingual, networked, connected.

Yet this entangled, international, multilingual (Dutch Atlantic) world was also multicultural, and Games critiques the book for its focus on the networks and connections of Europeans and their descendants. Amerindians and their vital role in the maintenance of Dutch military and political authority in the Guianas are left out. The maroons against whom the Amerindians helped the Dutch in the Guianas and their persistent challenges to Dutch control in the region receive little mention. In fact, the role of enslaved Africans and free people of color are only mentioned in passing in a few of the essays. Moreover, Africa, Games observes, is in this book not connected to the Dutch Atlantic despite the fact that Elmina was governed by the Dutch between 1680 and 1800. And religion, with the notable exception of discussions of Portuguese Jews and their communities and networks, is largely ignored in this volume.



Games, we acknowledge, is right to point out these omissions. Obviously this volume is not exhaustive, nor was it intended to be. Cogent, challenging, and enlightening as all these essays are, they can only do so much. The scope of the authors' briefs were limited in chronology and geography. They were to begin to answer the questions of how, exactly, did the Atlantic matter to the Dutch? And why was the Atlantic engagement of the Dutch important not only for the Dutch themselves, but also for all the other actors involved in the Atlantic in the early modern period? The authors' attempts to answer these questions have been presented. And it is not surprising that most of the answers are grounded in economics. The Atlantic was more important for the Dutch economically in the period between 1680 and 1800 than has been acknowledged to date. Many of the authors get beyond this simple fact and show us *how* this economic growth happened – via personal connections that were often regional, intra-imperial, cross-national, and multicultural. But this economic growth (and eventual decline), as many of the chapters also demonstrate, occurred within a set of international laws governing trade and against a backdrop of the extension of European politics into the Atlantic domains, including neutrality, war, and social movements such as revolutions and calls for abolition. A few of the authors also show that the Dutch in the Atlantic mattered for other nations such as the English, French and Spanish who depended on foreigners to maintain their own empires, and that Dutch imperatives for settlement mattered a great deal for ethnic and religious minorities such as the Portuguese Jews. And the Atlantic mattered for Dutch intellectual and artistic circuits and vice versa, though, as two of the essays argue, there was little recognition of the space as particularly Dutch.

But questions remain. Due to logistical and practical reasons, not all topics pertaining to the vast oceanic space that comprised the Dutch Atlantic, even with a limited chronology and geographical focus, could be addressed in one volume. Indeed, as Games notes, perhaps the most illustrative examples of connections, linkages, entanglement, are yet to come. How did Elmina connect culturally and economically with the rest of the Atlantic world? How can the Dutch cultural legacy in North America and the Cape Colony be included in a conceptualization of the Dutch Atlantic? What were the Cape Colony's linkages to the (Dutch) Atlantic world? Furthermore, although some work has already been done on the dynamic role of Amerindians in the Dutch settlements, further comparative research would help shed light on all sorts of fascinating questions about European colonization.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, although much

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18 See the works cited in note 15 of this essay for the role of Amerindians.

scholarship has produced on religion in the Dutch colonies, a synthesis is lacking. Again, many questions remain.

For now, we hope this volume takes up the challenge formulated by Jan de Vries that the contradictory nature of the early modern “Dutch” Atlantic may offer the perfect test of the viability of the very concept of an Atlantic world – an assertion echoed by Alison Games.<sup>19</sup> By studying the “expansion without empire” of the most loosely national and least centralized of all European states involved, we are, by definition, looking at historical phenomena that were transatlantic and trans-imperial. We have advocated an approach to the Dutch Atlantic that privileges connections, and believe that any study should be conceptualized, at least partially, in terms of its linkages with other locales. This kind of transnational or entangled history is easily called for, but very hard to do, as is seen by the limitations of this volume. For all its challenges however – challenges with which all the authors in this book have grappled – it is vitally important to try to do this kind of research: transnational, multilingual, looking at the Atlantic in terms of intersections, entanglements, and interactions. This perspective will help us in reflecting on the question of whether all of the globalizing early modern Atlantic was really an integrated world, and if so, by what standards precisely. This volume opens up new perspectives on our understanding of the place of Dutch colonies and networks in the early modern Atlantic world, but also leaves plenty of room for further research, exploration, and discovery.

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19 Jan de Vries, “Dutch Atlantic Economies.” See also Alison Games’ essay in this volume.



## SECTION 1

### *Caribbean Encounters*





# Curaçao as a Transit Center to the Spanish Main and the French West Indies

Wim Klooster

An official Dutch government report described Curaçao in the late eighteenth century as “the only safe port that the state has in the West Indies, one in which more than 300 ships of the largest size can be sheltered and where they are shielded against the force of wind and sea, where all the ships can be keel-hauled and recover from sustained damage, where a defeated fleet or merchantmen coming from our colonies can always flee because of its leeward location...”<sup>1</sup> Ideal for shipping traffic, the island had long since been an important regional market, described by a contemporary author as a “small paradise of earthly abundance.”<sup>2</sup> The aim of this chapter is to review the island’s commercial heyday, its connections with the Republic, its place in Caribbean trade networks, and the concomitant mobility of its populations.

Captured from Habsburg Spain during the last stages of the Dutch Revolt, Curaçao did not immediately become a center of commercial activity. It began its life under Dutch rule as a naval base. Although some military raids were launched from the island to inflict damage on settlements on the Venezuelan coast, Curaçao did not play a key role in the Atlantic theater of the war with Spain. The West India Company even considered abandoning the former Spanish cattle ranch in the startup years. It was not until the late 1650s, a decade after the Dutch Republic and Spain had signed the Treaty of Münster (1648), that trade – especially with nearby Spanish colonies – became the island’s lifeblood. In the eighteenth century, Curaçao also forged close ties with the French Caribbean, a connection that historians have virtually ignored.

The transformation of Curaçao from a sleepy, sparsely inhabited island to a bustling commercial hub was a rapid one. Even before the Dutch West India Company (WIC) declared Willemstad a free port in 1675, Curaçao had earned a reputation for the wide array of European manufactures and African slaves available for sale. Often in defiance of foreign mercantilist laws, the island’s

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1 National Archives of the Netherlands, The Hague (hereafter NL-HaNA), Verspreide Westindische Stukken, 1.05.06, inv. no. 972, report of W.A.I. van Grovestein and W.C. Boeij, The Hague, 11 February 1791.

2 J.H. Hering, *Beschryving van het eiland Curaçao en de daar onder hoorende eilanden, Bonaire, Oroba en Klein Curaçao. Benevens een kort bericht, wegens het gesprongen schip Alphen* (Amsterdam: J.V. Selm, 1779), 59.

pioneer merchants established commercial contacts with English settlers in North America and populations across the Greater Caribbean. The buttress of Curaçao's trade was the business conducted in Spanish America, in particular the nearby Spanish Main. Venezuela was a rich provider of tobacco and hides and, especially, cacao, of which it was the world's leading producer. The regions to its West between Panama and Río Hacha offered copious amounts of silver, which the Dutch usually received in exchange for their supplies at Portobelo. In the first half of the eighteenth century, this was the source of virtually all cash on Curaçao.<sup>3</sup> Many sloops and schooners also left Willemstad for Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Santo Domingo. So intensive and valuable was the traffic with these areas that authorities in metropolitan Spain came to view Curaçao along with Colônia do Sacramento in the Southern Cone of South America as the two main gates through which smuggled goods entered the Spanish colonies.<sup>4</sup> In view of the scope of the illegal trade, the administrator of the coast guard of Florida and Cuba therefore once suggested that the Spanish invade Curaçao. He called the island one of the worst "hangnails" in America.<sup>5</sup>

British and Dutch vessels also established trade links between the Thirteen Colonies and the Dutch island. Due to its poor soil and lack of rainfall, Curaçao was unable to produce its own food. Provisions had to be imported, first from the Dutch Republic, but soon most foodstuffs were supplied by North American merchants and imported by English subjects residing on the island.<sup>6</sup> A voyage from New York took only three weeks, while ocean-going

3 NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie (NWIC), 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 1155, Governor Jan Noach du Fajj to the WIC, Chamber of Zeeland, Curaçao, 20 December 1730. This wealth of silver explains why returns to the Dutch Republic involved the remittance of sealed bags of silver as frequently as bills of exchange. Cf. John J. McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1600–1775: A Handbook* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 293. Conversely, in times of slack trade the island virtually lacked cash. In 1753, local merchants eager to keep their creditors satisfied went to the extreme of sending silver kitchen utensils to the Dutch Republic: NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 1161, fol. 13, J.G. Pax and Nathaniel Ellis to governor Isaac Faesch, 24 September 1753.

4 NL-HaNA, Fagel, 1.10.29, inv. no. 1784, unsigned letter to Grand Pensionary Stein, Antigola, 21 June 1731.

5 Lance Grahm, *The Political Economy of Smuggling: Regional Informal Economies in Early Bourbon New Granada* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 50–51.

6 NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 1160, fol. 91, Governor Isaac Faesch to the WIC, Chamber of Amsterdam, Curaçao, 16 February 1751. The New York company of John and Henry Cruger sent 56 vessels with flour, bread, and other foodstuffs to Curaçao in the years 1762–1768, using their relative Teleman Cruger as their local agent: New York Historical Society, 442.1, John & Henry Cruger, Wastebook 1762–1768.

Dutch ships often needed several months to complete the trip to Curaçao, frequently causing the provisions to decay. Besides, the New Yorkers and New Englanders offered their provisions at a lower price. In 1724, for example, flour from New York cost 14 cents, that from the Netherlands at least 18 cents per pound.<sup>7</sup> Dependence on these supplies could become a liability in wartime. During the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739–1748), fought in the Caribbean between Britain and Spain, the governor of New York refused to sell even one barrel of flour or meat to the Curaçaoans, causing serious embarrassment on the Dutch island.<sup>8</sup>

From an early date, the commercial fortunes of Curaçao were linked to the interimperial slave trade. In 1642, a West India Company official first suggested to make the island a transit center in the slave trade from Luanda to the Spanish Caribbean. Portuguese merchants had traditionally provided ports such as Veracruz and Cartagena with bonded Central Africans whom they had embarked in Luanda, but that town had fallen into Dutch hands the year before.<sup>9</sup> While this plan failed to materialize, some 15 years later Dutch slave ships began to call at Curaçao and sell their human cargoes. The creation of a slave market on the island fulfilled economic needs for both sides involved. Dutch slave traders had survived the collapse of Brazil by selling slaves to foreign colonies, but the notion of a reliable single market must have been attractive to them. At the same time, a Spanish colonist took the initiative to approach Curaçao's Director Mathias Beck and suggest he sell slaves in Portobelo in order to blaze a trail by which settlers on the Spanish Main would come and trade for slaves in the future.<sup>10</sup> The trade in humans was so successful that the Genoese holders of the *asiento*, the monopoly of slave shipments to Spanish America, signed a contract with the Dutch West India Company in 1662 that allowed them to buy slaves in Curaçao. The trend was thus set for the decades to come, during which the island became the largest transit port in the inter-American slave trade. The slave trade to Venezuela and New Granada was not even interrupted by the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1713), which found the Dutch suppliers and their Spanish American

7 NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 1154, Governor Jan Noach du Fajj to the WIC, Chamber of Zeeland, Curaçao, 20 October 1724.

8 NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 1157, fol. 144, governor Isaac Faesch to the WIC, Chamber of Amsterdam, Curaçao, 12 September 1741.

9 W.R. Menkman, "Nederlandsche en vreemde slavenvaart," *De West-Indische Gids* 26 (1944): 97–111.

10 Mathias Beck to the WIC, Curaçao, 28 July 1657, in *Curacao Papers 1640–1665*, New Netherland Documents, vol. 17, ed. Charles T. Gehring and J.A. Schiltkamp (Interlaken, NY: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1987), 104–105.



customers in opposite camps.<sup>11</sup> In all, some 70,000 slaves found their way from Africa to Curaçao in the period 1656–1730, most of whom were reshipped to Spanish colonies.<sup>12</sup> For those deemed unfit for Spanish bondage, Curaçao was their final destination. In these years, Han Jordaán has argued, “nearly every free person seems to have been involved in the slave trade to some degree.”<sup>13</sup>

Once the regular availability of enslaved Africans attracted customers from the Spanish colonies, Dutch merchants began to offer a wide variety of dry goods for sale. As a consequence, their purchases of products grown in foreign parts of the Americas increased rapidly. By 1663, large amounts of Venezuelan cacao were already being exported from Curaçao to the Dutch Republic. The proximity to Venezuela, the world’s largest cacao producer, allowed the Dutch to play a large role in the transatlantic cacao trade and Amsterdam to become one of the foremost global cacao markets. The holds of ships leaving Curaçao for Dutch metropolitan ports also included tobacco from Cuba, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and Santo Domingo, sugar and coffee from the French West Indies, as well as indigo, logwood, and hides. Besides, bullion and specie from the Spanish Main accounted for more than a quarter of the value of the home-bound cargoes.

International warfare greatly enhanced the fortunes of the Dutch entrepôt. Trade was especially brisk during the War of Jenkins’ Ear, the Seven Years’ War (1756–1763), and the War of American Independence (1775–1783), but declined once peaceful relations returned and foreign authorities could focus on the fight against smugglers. The 1730s and the early 1750s stand out as periods in which officials in Venezuela successfully blocked the Curaçaoans’ access to local products, creating hardship on the Dutch island.<sup>14</sup> During the Seven Years’ War, merchants from Curaçao and St. Eustatius were so active in their trade with Saint-Domingue that they helped maintain commercial communication between France and the Antilles.<sup>15</sup> Due to Dutch

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11 Cornelis Ch. Goslinga, “Curaçao as a slave–trading center during the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1714),” *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 52 (1977): 1–50.

12 Johannes Menne Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600–1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 54.

13 Han Jordaán, “The Curaçao Slave Market: From Asiento Trade to Free Trade, 1700–1730,” in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Trans-Atlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585–1817*, ed. Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), 219–57, 256.

14 Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches: Dutch Trade in the Caribbean, 1648–1795* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1998), 149, 168, 175.

15 Philippe Chassaingne, “L’économie des îles sucrières dans les conflits maritimes de la seconde moitié du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Histoire, économie et société* 7, no. 1 (1988): 93–105, 101.

neutrality, Curaçao's trade with the belligerents also thrived in the season of war. When, in 1779, France's participation in the American War of Independence (1775–1783) induced French authorities to invite all nations, except the British, to come and trade freely, many Curaçaoan shipowners heeded the call.<sup>16</sup>

### Connections with the French Antilles

All of this has been documented and distilled in monographs.<sup>17</sup> What has been understudied are the commercial ties with the French Caribbean and the eighteenth-century slave trade. Curaçao's French connections assumed a growing significance in the course of the eighteenth century due to the economic development of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and especially the Southern parts of Saint-Domingue. Historians have overlooked the vital link Curaçao provided between the French colonies and the Spanish American markets.<sup>18</sup> Thus, in the 1740s, French merchants based in the French colonies sold silk products to shipowners on Curaçao, making a handsome profit, since their merchandise was cheaper than the same French silk arriving on Dutch ships

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- 16 NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 1168, fols. 641–642, Governor Jean Rodier to the WIC, Chamber of Amsterdam, Curaçao, 28 January 1779. See also Isaac S. Emmanuel and Suzanne A. Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles* (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1970), 89.
  - 17 Curaçao: Celestino Andrés Arauz Monfante, *El contrabando holandés en el Caribe durante la primera mitad del siglo XVIII*, 2 vols. (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1984); Ramón Aizpurua, *Curazao y la costa de Caracas: Introducción al estudio del contrabando de la Provincia de Venezuela en tiempos de la Compañía Guipuzcoana* (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1993); Grahns, *Political Economy of Smuggling*; Klooster, *Illicit Riches*; Jeremy David Cohen, "Cultural and Commercial Intermediaries in an Extra-Legal System of Exchange: The *Prácticos* of the Venezuelan Littoral in the Eighteenth Century," *Itinerario* 27, no. 2 (2003), 105–124. St. Eustatius: Richard Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies, 1739–1763* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936); Cornelis Ch. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas 1680–1791* (Assen, Maastricht and Dover, N.H.: Van Gorcum, 1985); Michael J. Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680–1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Victor Enthoven, "That Abominable Nest of Pirates: St. Eustatius and the North Americans, 1680–1780," *Early American Studies* 10, no. 2 (2012): 239–301.
  - 18 See also NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 474, fol. 176, W. Backer and W. Roëll to Governor Isaac Faesch, Amsterdam, 11 June 1743.

from Amsterdam.<sup>19</sup> In the second half of the century, the French islands sent large amounts of syrup, rum, and brandy to Curaçao.

In the first quarter of the eighteenth century, Curaçao became a transit point in the mule trade from Tierra Firme to the French colonies, a business that eventually developed into the main branch of Curaçao's commerce.<sup>20</sup> Mules were used as a mode of transport and as pack animals, but predominantly as draft animals on Caribbean sugar plantations. Because of their strength, their short lifespan, and their inability to reproduce, they were in perennial demand. As early as 1723, the governor of Coro (Venezuela) complained about the annual export of 1500 mules to Caribbean islands by way of Curaçao.<sup>21</sup> Curaçaoan sailors were soon experts in handling and transporting these animals, which they often introduced illegally in Curaçao by steering their vessels to the island's outer bays.<sup>22</sup> In the early years of the nineteenth century, Alexander von Humboldt witnessed the embarkation of mules in Puerto Cabello (Venezuela): "They are thrown down with ropes, and then hoisted on board the vessels by means of a machine resembling a crane. Ranged in two files, the mules with difficulty keep their footing during the rolling and pitching of the ship; and in order to frighten and render them more docile, a drum is beaten during a great part of the day and night."<sup>23</sup> The tendency of the mules to kick and bite made it easy to smuggle all kinds of goods on the vessels carrying them, since customs collectors preferred safety over vigilance.<sup>24</sup>

The French Caribbean import of the mules, whose role in the sugar mills was crucial, took off dramatically in the second half of the century. In the year 1786, French planters imported 6487 mules from the Spanish Main and on the eve of the Haitian Revolution, 50,000 mules were counted in Saint-Domingue, where a single plantation could use 80 of these animals. Not all of these ani-

19 Walter Bodmer, "Tropenkaufleute und Plantagenbesitzer in Niederländisch-Westindien im 18. und zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Acta Tropica* 3 (1946): 289–321, 304.

20 NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 609, fol. 556, Governor Jean Rodier and Council to the WIC, 14 March 1774. According to one French author in 1780, Dutch merchants from Curaçao and St. Eustatius almost completely controlled the mule trade to the French colonies: Weuves, le jeune, *Réflexions historiques et politiques sur le commerce de France avec ses colonies de l'Amérique* (Genève: L. Cellot, 1780), 54.

21 Arauz Monfante, *Contrabando holandés*, 1: 105.

22 NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 209, fol. 454, placard issued by Governor Jan Gales, 15 January 1739.

23 Alexander von Humboldt, *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America, during the years 1799–1804*, 3 vols. (London: George Bell and Sons, 1889), 2: 46.

24 G.B. Bosch, *Reizen in West-Indië*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: S. Emmering, 1985), 1: 310–311.

mals, incidentally, originated on the Spanish Main. They were also imported from Poitou, France, and in small numbers from the Greater Antilles.<sup>25</sup>

Venezuelan traders needed the mule business in order to finance their slave purchases in foreign colonies, as bonded Africans were always in demand and not regularly supplied through the regular channels. The main alternative, cacao, could not be legally shipped out, at least until 1777, when the Spanish authorities in Venezuela legalized trade with the French colonies. Although Curaçao remained off limits to traders from the mainland, Dutch merchants kept a firm hold on the mule trade.<sup>26</sup> Nor was it in anybody's interest to sideline the Curaçaoans, on whom French merchants continued to call, since they valued the commercial networks they maintained in Venezuela and New Granada.<sup>27</sup> The Curaçaoans also received support from the island's governor, Jean Rodier, who exempted the sloops active in this trade from paying import duties, as long as they sailed on after taking in water and provisions.<sup>28</sup> Curaçao did not always serve as a transit port in the mule trade. Not only did some

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- 25 Ramón Aizpurua A guirre, "Las mulas venezolanas y el Caribe Oriental del siglo XVIII: datos para una historia olvidada," *Boletín Americanista* 30, no. 38 (1998): 5–15; 8, 10. Jacques de Cauna, *Au temps des îles à sucre: Histoire d'une plantation de Saint-Domingue au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Karthala, 1987), 13, 44. Philibert Chabert, Pierre Flandrin and Jean-Baptiste Huzard, *Instructions et observations sur les maladies des animaux domestiques*, 6 vols., 3rd ed. (Paris: De L'Imprimerie et dans le Librairie Vétérinaire de Madame Huzard, 1808), 3: 307.
  - 26 Ángel López Cantos, *Don Francisco de Saavedra: Segundo intendente de Caracas* (Sevilla: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos de Sevilla, 1973), 102. At times, Aruba was used as a way station in the mule trade between the Coro region and Curaçao: Vicente de Amézaga Aresti, *Vicente Antonio de Icuza, comandante de corsarios* (Caracas: Comisión Nacional de Cuatricentenario de Caracas, 1966), 50. Chabert, Flandrin and Huzard, *Instructions et observations sur les maladies*, 3: 292.
  - 27 Jean Tarrade, "Le commerce entre les Antilles françaises et les possessions espagnoles d'Amérique à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *Commerce et plantation dans la Caraïbe XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles: Actes du Colloque de Bordeaux, 15–16 mars 1991*, ed. Paul Butel (Bordeaux: Maison des Pays Ibériques, 1992), 27–43: 30, 36. Merchants on the French islands did not exclusively rely on the Curaçaoans. See, for example, the ill-fated voyage in 1763 of a ship from Martinique to Venezuela, where the captain had intended to buy mules: Ramón Aizpurua Aguirre, "El corso de la Compañía Guipuzcoana: los casos de la lancha *San Fernando* y de la balandra *Nuestra Señora de Aranzazu*," *Itsas Memoria. Revista de Estudios Marítimos del País Vasco*, 5 (2006): 379–92, 389.
  - 28 NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 612, fol. 645, C.A. Roelans, customs collector, and Michiel Römer, bookkeeper, to the WIC, Curaçao, 4 April 1783. The WIC ordered the Curaçaoan government to collect the customs, although it is unlikely that this ever happened: NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 612, fol. 1054, C.A. Roelans to the WIC, Curaçao, 26 March 1784.

mules originate on the island itself, a number of local traders carried on a direct trade from the Venezuelan coast to the French islands, while others shipped the animals to Jamaica.<sup>29</sup>

The mules' main destination was Saint-Domingue, whose planters paid in cash crops, their sugar shipments accounting for almost 90 percent of Curaçao's French West Indian sugar imports in the period 1736–1755.<sup>30</sup> In the decades that followed, this flow of sugar must have increased further, as Saint-Domingue developed into the world's largest producer of the sweet substance, but data are missing to confirm this hypothesis. The re-export of French colonial products from Curaçao and St. Eustatius to the Dutch Republic reached such heights that an interruption in commerce seriously hurt merchants in the Dutch Republic. The interruptions were not always caused by privateers. When the French army invaded Dutch territory in 1747 in the closing stages of the War of the Austrian Succession, the States General responded by banning the export of "French" refined sugar. More than 100 Amsterdam merchants, virtually making up the entire merchant elite, then signed a request to exempt the sugar that entered the Republic by way of the Dutch Caribbean islands.<sup>31</sup>

In view of the economic dependence on Saint-Domingue, which only increased in the second half of the century, the Haitian Revolution was an unmitigated disaster for the Curaçaoan economy, contributing to the island's decline in the late eighteenth century. Curaçao's leading merchant, David Morales, who owned property in the French colony, was hard hit, but many

29 See, for example, NL-HaNA, 1.05.12.01, Curaçao, Bonaire en Aruba tot 1828, 1.05.12.01, inv. no. 881, fol. 42, for Curaçaoan shipments from the Bight of Maracaibo to Saint-Domingue in 1761. For the transport to Jamaica, see NL-HaNA, 1.05.12.01, inv. no. 1555, fols. 76–77. The shipment of mules from Ríoacha, the Guajiro coast, and Venezuela to Jamaica was, however, mostly in the hands of English and Spanish subjects: Héctor R. Feliciano Ramos, *El contrabando inglés en el Caribe y el Golfo de México (1748–1778)* (Sevilla: Excma. Diputación Provincial de Sevilla, 1990), 213–214; Gerardo Andrade González, "El negro: Factor esencial de la economía colonial en la gobernación de Popayán del Nuevo Reino de Granada," *Revista de Historia de América*, no. 120 (Jul–Dec 1995): 35–66, 52; Grahn, *Political Economy of Smuggling*, 45, 63, 95. Curaçao's mule trade did not disappear overnight: Martinus Stuart, *Jaarboeken van het koninkrijk der Nederlanden Het jaar 1818. Tweede stuk* (Amsterdam: E. Maaskamp, 1823), 107; Tomás Pérez Tenreiro, ed., *Angel Laborde y Navarro, capitán de navío: Relación documental de los sucesos de Venezuela, 1822–1823* (Caracas: Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia, 1974), 213, 221.

30 Calculated on the basis of Klooster, *Illicit Riches*, 235.

31 NL-HaNA, Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv. no. 5782, J. van Loon and P. Backer, Directors of the WIC, to the States General, Amsterdam, 9 January 1748.

others were ruined.<sup>32</sup> The island's governor-general would later write that ever since the revolt in Saint-Domingue "entire families have been reduced to beggary. Swarms of beggars, white, colored and black, are seen these days in the streets, inconveniencing the passers-by."<sup>33</sup> The loss of Saint-Domingue as a trading partner, nonetheless, was not the sole reason for Curaçao's economic decline. At an earlier date, commerce with Portobelo, traditionally a major supplier of specie, had begun to fall off by the 1770s, when at most one vessel returned from that port and then with a cargo that was hardly valuable.<sup>34</sup> Trade with nearby Venezuela continued to thrive, but was increasingly controlled by merchants on the Spanish Main and conducted in their vessels, a stark contrast with the days when Curaçaoan vessels had accounted for the bulk of this trade.<sup>35</sup> The War of American Independence offered Curaçao's traders a reprieve, but by the late 1780s a slump set in. The number of vessels arriving in Willemstad declined by more than half in the decade after 1786.<sup>36</sup> Ships from the United States even began to transport Caribbean produce from Curaçao to the Netherlands.<sup>37</sup> Curaçao had seen booms and busts before, but no new heyday would follow this steep decline. Having ranked behind Suriname throughout the eighteenth century in terms of the volume and value of products shipped to the Republic, after 1788 Curaçao also fell behind St. Eustatius.<sup>38</sup>

Similar to Curaçao, St. Eustatius or "Statia" was an important Caribbean transit center. Settled in 1636, the island had gradually forged commercial ties with foreign colonies in its vicinity. By 1688, eight ocean-going ships left from

32 Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, 717.

33 J. de Hullu, "Curaçao in 1817," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië* 67 (1913): 563–609, 569.

34 NL-HaNA, W1C, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 1166, fol. 63, Governor Jean Rodier to the W1C, Chamber of Amsterdam, Curaçao, 8 May 1775.

35 Vessels fitted out at the Spanish Main only occasionally called at Willemstad. These visits usually involved ships en route to Veracruz, Santo Domingo or Puerto Rico, carrying more cacao than had been registered. Klooster, *Illicit Riches*, 128.

36 NL-HaNA, W1C, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 612, fols. 747–48, Governor Johannes de Veer to the W1C directors, Curaçao, 11 August 1783. Wim Klooster, "Curaçao and the Caribbean Transit Trade," in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Trans-Atlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585–1817*, ed. Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven, 203–18, 206.

37 P.J. van Winter, *Het aandeel van den Amsterdamschen handel aan den opbouw van het Amerikaansche Gemeenebest*, 2 vols. ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1933), 2: 96–97.

38 In 1790–93, 150 merchantmen arrived in Amsterdam from Suriname, 83 from St. Eustatius and 30 from Curaçao: W.F.H. Oldewelt, "De Scheepvaartsstatistiek van Amsterdam in de 17<sup>e</sup> en 18<sup>e</sup> eeuw," *Jaarboek Amstelodamum* 45 (1953): 114–151, 130–149.

the island with Amsterdam as their destination, their cargoes filled with sugar from the surrounding French and English islands.<sup>39</sup> Attracting merchants looking for both provisions and dry goods, St. Eustatius did not depend on commercial expertise from Curaçao. It was perfectly capable of standing on its own two feet. Beef and salted fish from Ireland and North American flour were always available, while Dutch imports included hats, stockings, spices, paper, glassware, axes, pots, printed cotton fabric, and coarse linen from Osnabrück, Germany.<sup>40</sup> If Curaçao had become a commercial bridge between the Spanish Main and the French West Indies, a major feature of Statia's commerce in the eighteenth century was its role in facilitating trade between French and British merchants. The governor of St. Christopher (St. Kitts) correctly opined: "The pretence of the Dutch buying of the English and then selling to the French is a mere fallacy. The produce of all St. Eustatius is not above 500 or 600 of our hogsheads of sugar a year... The English and French vessels meet there and deal together as principals, or they have their agents, Steward and Sagan, for the purpose. The Dutch have no concern but to receive the company's duties."<sup>41</sup> From neighboring Guadeloupe alone, 55 vessels arrived at Statia in 1733 carrying sugar, rum, and molasses, for which there were always British American customers.<sup>42</sup> In exchange, the Guadeloupeans received slaves and provisions. Guadeloupe's dependence on Statian foodstuffs was such that its merchants were given permission at least three times between 1749–1751 to purchase provisions in the Dutch island.<sup>43</sup>

39 Victor Enthoven, "That Abominable Nest of Pirates," 252.

40 L. Knappert, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche Bovenwindsche eilanden in de 18de eeuw* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1932), 221. Lucien René Abenon, *La Guadeloupe de 1671 à 1759: Etude politique, économique et sociale*, 2 vols. (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 1987), 2:12.

41 William Mathew, governor of St. Christopher, to the Council of Trade and Plantations, 26 May 1737, in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, vol. 43 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery's Office, 1963), 170.

42 Knappert, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche Bovenwindsche eilanden*, 218–219. Cf. for Statian illegal trade on St. Lucia in the 1770s: Daniel Marc Antoine Chardon and Louis Nicolas Pretrel, *Essai sur la colonie de Sainte-Lucie. Par un ancien intendant de cette isle* (Neuchatel: l'Imprimerie de la Société Typographique, 1779), 73.

43 Three decades later, in 1779, when an Anglo-French War raged, the Statians monopolized the food supply to Guadeloupe. Anne Pérotin-Dumon, *La ville aux îles, la ville dans l'île: Basse-Terre et Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, 1650–1820* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2000), 153, 181. Both Statian and Guadeloupean vessels were instrumental in maintaining the mutual commercial ties. When in 1781 news of the British declaration of war against the Dutch arrived on the French island, 24 schooners and brigantines were about to sail to Statia. Gérard Lafleur, "Saint-Eustache aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles," *Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire de la Guadeloupe* 130 (2001), 27–45, 39.

Statia experienced its own crisis in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, immediately following its “Golden Age,” which saw an unprecedented volume of imports and re-exports in the 1770s. After a few hundred islanders had perished in hurricanes in 1780,<sup>44</sup> a British naval squadron under Admiral George Rodney punished Statia in February 1781 for its massive support of the American rebels in the form of arms and ammunition. The raid was very costly. Not only did Rodney seize three million British pounds worth of ships, merchandise, and property, another four million pounds worth of bullion was stolen from the residents as well.<sup>45</sup> To add insult to injury, the French authorities opened some free ports on Guadeloupe, starting in 1785.<sup>46</sup> And yet, Statia did not decline yet, as its exports in the early 1790s reached levels almost comparable to the mid-1770s.<sup>47</sup> Nor did the island suffer from the Haitian Revolution, since Saint-Domingue had never been more than a marginal trading partner. The French invasion of the Dutch Republic of 1795, the establishment of the Batavian Republic, and the consequent long-term interruption of shipping traffic to and from Dutch ports seem, however, to have wreaked havoc on the mercantile community of Oranjestad, many of whose members relocated to other parts of the Caribbean.

### The Slave Trade

If a few historians have studied Curaçao's commerce with the French Caribbean, the later history of the island's slave trade has been almost entirely neglected.<sup>48</sup> It is clear that slave imports from Africa dwindled after the War of

44 Knappert, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche Bovenwindsche eilanden*, 287. There is no proof for Sheridan's assertion that 4000 to 5000 people died. Richard B. Sheridan, “The Crisis of Slave Subsistence in the British West Indies during and after the American Revolution,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 33, no. 4 (Oct. 1976): 615–641, 627.

45 Han Jordaán, “St. Eustatius after the British occupation of 1781: failing to adapt to a changing world?” (paper presented at the Dutch Atlantic Connections conference, University of Leiden, August 24–25, 2012), 3–4. [http://www.kitlv.nl/pdf\\_documents/Han\\_Jordaán\\_-\\_St\\_Eustatius.pdf](http://www.kitlv.nl/pdf_documents/Han_Jordaán_-_St_Eustatius.pdf).

46 P. Butel, “L'essor antillais au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *Histoire des Antilles et de la Guyane*, ed. Pierre Pluchon (Toulouse: Edouard Privat, 1982), 109–139, 134.

47 Jordaán, “St. Eustatius after 1781,” 2; J. de Hullu, “St. Eustatius, St. Martin en Saba op het laatst van de 18de eeuw,” *De West-Indische Gids* 1 (1919), 385–393, 390.

48 The exceptions are Postma, *Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 221–222, Jordaán, “The Curaçao Slave Market,” and Han Jordaán, “Slavernij en vrijheid op Curaçao: De dynamiek van een achttiende-eeuws Atlantisch handelsknooppunt” (unpublished PhD diss., University of Leiden, 2012), 52–57.



the Spanish Succession (1701–1713), during which the Dutch colony acted for the last time as a transit center for the *asiento* slave trade to the Spanish colonies. The Colonial Council in Dutch Elmina on the African Gold Coast informed the West India Company Board in 1716 that, henceforth, no slaves would be sent to Curaçao, since they remained unsold there. Suriname was now the preferred destination.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, in the subsequent 23 years (1717–1739), no more than 3105 slaves arrived on Curaçao, constituting an average of 135 per year, compared to an annual average of 1049 during the previous four decades (1675–1716). Dutch slavers did revive their shipments to Curaçao in times of international warfare, inducing local merchants to add enslaved Africans to the supplies they offered to foreign colonies. Thus, seven slave ships arrived from Africa in the 1740s and ten more in the period 1755–1764.<sup>50</sup> Yet even in those years, the numbers did not match those of an earlier period.

What is largely unknown is Curaçao's intra-Caribbean slave trade after the island's involvement in the *asiento* business came to an end in 1713. An irregular demand for slaves seems to have remained in Spanish America. During the War of Jenkins' Ear Curaçaoan merchants cultivated contacts with the British island of St. Christopher. From there, they brought their human cargoes to Curaçao and had the Africans shipped to the Spanish Main.<sup>51</sup> After this war, one merchant in Maracaibo imported some 600 slaves from Curaçao over the course of a few years.<sup>52</sup> To the West of Maracaibo, in Santa Marta and Río Hacha, slaves arrived from the Dutch island in the 1760s and 1770s in exchange for local dyewood.<sup>53</sup> Curaçaoan slaves were also marketed in the French and British colonies.<sup>54</sup> In the first 17 years after Georgia legalized slavery in 1750,

49 NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 103, fol. 109, D.G.A. Engelgraaff Robberts and Council to the WIC, Elmina, 6 July 1716. Cf. the slave market on Curaçao around this year: Han Jordaan, "De veranderde situatie op de Curaçaose slavenmarkt en de mislukte slavenopstand op de plantage Santa Maria in 1716," in *Veranderend Curaçao: Collectie essays opgedragen aan Lionel Capriles ter gelegenheid van zijn 45-jarig jubileum bij de Maduro & Curjel Bank N.V.*, ed. Henny E. Coomans, Maritza Coomans-Eustatia, and Johan van 't Leven (Bloemendaal: Stichting Libri Antilliani, 1999), 473–501.

50 Calculated on the basis of Postma, *Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 45, 48, 223.

51 Bodmer, "Tropenkaufleute und Plantagenbesitzer," 305.

52 NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 1160, fol. 86, Governor Isaac Faesch to the WIC, Chamber of Amsterdam, Curaçao, 23 January 1751.

53 Antonio de Narváez y la Torre, "El informe sobre la Provincia de Santa Marta y Río Hacha de 1778," in *Ensayos costeños de la Colonia a la República: 1770–1890*, ed. Alfonso Múnera (N.p.: Colcultura, 1994), 27–73, 71.

54 Archief Zeeland (AZ), Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie (MCC), 561, fol. 15, Juan Schuurman to the Directors of the MCC, Curaçao, 19 December 1730.

139 slaves were furnished by Curaçaoans.<sup>55</sup> It is not unlikely that one of the human cargoes introduced into Georgia carried smallpox. The epidemic that ravaged the port of Savannah in 1764 was said to have arrived from Curaçao.<sup>56</sup>

Curaçaoan traders were also eager to sell to customers in Saint-Domingue, whose demand for slaves was virtually insatiable.<sup>57</sup> In 1775, planters on Curaçao may have intended to buy slaves from the arriving ship *de Jonge Ruijter*, but the local traders bought all 238 Africans and shipped them immediately to Saint-Domingue for sale.<sup>58</sup> Slaves also went in the opposite direction, from Saint-Domingue to Curaçao. In the 1770s, Curaçaoan masters manumitted no fewer than 42 slaves who hailed from the French Antilles. Most of them were creoles from Saint-Domingue, while a few had been born in Île à Vache (just off Southern Saint-Domingue) and Martinique. At least another ten originated in Congo and other parts of Africa, but slave ships had brought them to the French colonies. Conspicuous among the manumitting Curaçaoans are the names of merchants and ship captains conducting trade with Saint-Domingue.<sup>59</sup> In the same years, letters of freedom were regularly issued by white Frenchmen who happened to find themselves on Curaçao. Without

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- 55 Darold D. Wax, "New Negroes Are Always in Demand': The Slave Trade in Eighteenth-Century Georgia," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (Summer 1984), 193–220, 198; Gregory E. O'Malley, "Beyond the Middle Passage: Slave Migration from the Caribbean to North America, 1619–1807," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 66, no. 1 (January 2009): 125–172, 150.
- 56 Joseph I. Waring, "Colonial Medicine in Georgia and South Carolina," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 59 (1975), supplement, 151–153, 152. The Africans probably came from Angola, a common source of smallpox epidemics in Brazil and in particular associated with the 1762–1763 epidemic in Maranhão: Dauril Alden and Joseph C. Miller, "Out of Africa: The Slave Trade and the Transmission of Smallpox to Brazil, 1560–1831," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 2 (1987): 195–224, 207. In late 1763, one slave ship arriving from the Angolan Coast disembarked 405 Africans on Curaçao: Postma, *Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, app. 2, 337. There is no sign, however, that the 1750 slave revolt on Curaçao hampered sales of black men and women, although the governor of St. Christopher did worry that the insurrection "might have a dangerous influence upon our own Slaves." David Barry Gaspar, *Bondmen & Rebels: A Study of Master-slave Relations in Antigua with Implications for Colonial British America* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 210.
- 57 AZ, MCC 562, fol. 305, Michiel Römer to the Directors of the MCC, Curaçao, 11 November 1772.
- 58 NL-HaNA, W1C, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 1166, fol. 17, Governor Jean Rodier to the W1C, Chamber of Zeeland, Curaçao, 10 January 1775.
- 59 The names were Benjamin Motta, Gabriel Pinedo, Isaak Sasso, Claes Schotborgh Janzn, Johannes de Pool, Lourents de Mey Scholten, Isaac Cardoso da Costa, and Isaac Pardo;

an exception, they were merchants, although it is unclear whether they traveled in the company of the slaves they freed.<sup>60</sup>

After 1780, the archives are increasingly silent about the slave trade.<sup>61</sup> Shipments now typically involved three, four or half a dozen slaves, whereas past supplies to foreign American markets had sometimes numbered in the hundreds. If warfare had opened up slave markets in decades past, the American Revolutionary War failed to do so for Curaçao. After the war's end, it was evident that owners of slave ships in the Dutch Republic preferred to deal with Suriname, Berbice, Essequibo, and Demerara. In 1786, six years after the last slave ship had arrived from Africa, Curaçao's ruling Council did still not give up its hope to restore the trade in human cargoes, revealing a project to use the slave trade to reinvigorate commerce with the Spanish colonies.<sup>62</sup> This was no idle talk. Shortly afterwards, one local merchant approached the viceroy of New Granada with a plan to supply slaves to any part of the viceroyalty.<sup>63</sup> The initiative was bound to fail, since Spanish Americans could now procure their enslaved workers through numerous other channels. The ban issued in Venezuela on importing slaves from the Dutch island after the slave revolt of August 1795, therefore, did not cause, but merely hastened, the demise of the Curaçaoan slave market.<sup>64</sup>

### Commercial Actors and Practices

Who were the residents of Curaçao, whose fate was inextricably bound up with the vicissitudes of interimperial trade? We know much about Curacao's contraband trade on an aggregate level, but little about the various groups of

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T. van der Lee, *Curaçaose vrijbrieven 1722–1863: Met indices op namen van vrijgelatenen en hun voormalige eigenaren* (Den Haag: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 1998), 158–60, 163–164, 170, 175–176, 180, 182, 184–185.

- 60 Why, for example, would Jean Tapiau have traveled with five slaves (three adult females, one male, and one child), whom he emancipated on Curaçao on 28 February 1774? And why would Jean Jacques Chatelain be accompanied by six children, two women, and one man, whom he freed on 29 September 1773?
- 61 A rare case of slave sales in the 1780s, involving a merchant from Guadeloupe, occurred in 1783: Pérotin-Dumon, *La ville aux îles, la ville dans l'île*, 193.
- 62 NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 613, fols. 1034–1035, Johannes de Veer and Michiel Römer to the WIC, Curaçao, 1 May 1786.
- 63 Archivo General de la Nación, Colombia [Bogotá], Colonia, Panamá. Online at <http://negrosyesclavos.archivogeneral.gov.co/portal/apps/php/documentacion.kwe>.
- 64 Miguel Acosta Saignes, *Vida de los esclavos negros en Venezuela* (La Habana: Casa de las Américas, 1978), 88–89.

islanders involved in interimperial trade. The least pecunious group, apart from the enslaved residents, were the sailors, who formed a significant part of Willemstad's population. At the start of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War in 1781, crew members sailing on local trading vessels numbered no fewer than 832.<sup>65</sup> These men usually supplemented their monthly wages by engaging in petty trade. Buying small amounts of merchandise on credit from metropolitan merchants or local shipowners, the sailors brought these commodities wherever their vessels took them. The risks were manifold, since ship and cargo could be seized by enemies, pirates, and coastguard ships seeking to intercept contraband goods. In the event the ship was captured, the sailor lost his wage and his trading goods, and still had to pay his creditors. In the 1750s, scores of sailors' families were thus impoverished and condemned to eat what was considered slave food.<sup>66</sup>

Local merchants and shipowners were the ones usually taking the initiative in organizing the trading voyages. Most of them were not monied men. One governor wrote that the island's trade was conducted by less well-off people who bought a sloop on credit and could not afford to pay it off until the sloop's return.<sup>67</sup> Investing all their fluid assets in a single voyage, shipowners were, indeed, usually not men of substance. Agreements with Dutch sellers of European dry goods for the Spanish American markets therefore stipulated payment only after the completion of a trading expedition to the Spanish Main.<sup>68</sup> Among the local traders, Sephardi Jews dominated. Enjoying religious freedom on Curaçao and fluent in Spanish, they established widespread commercial contacts in the nearby Spanish colonies.<sup>69</sup>

Most local shipowners were connected to merchants in Amsterdam or Middelburg, while others purchased goods from ships that arrived from Dutch metropolitan ports or from local import-export companies. A Curaçaoan trader by the name of Van Lennep, for example, involved in both re-exports to the Spanish Main and the French Caribbean, did business with Thomas and Adriaan Hope of Amsterdam. Interestingly, the

65 NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 1173, meeting of the War Council, Curaçao, 26 February 1781.

66 NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 599, fols. 912–913, J.G. Pax and Nathaniel Ellis to Governor Isaac Faesch and the Council, Curaçao, 24 September 1753.

67 NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 591, fol. 162, Governor Isaac Faesch to the WIC, Curaçao, 30 April 1744. See also Jordaan, "Slavernij en vrijheid," 164–167.

68 Bodmer, "Tropenkaufleute und Plantagenbesitzer," 303.

69 Wim Klooster, "Contraband Trade by Curaçao's Jews with Countries of Idolatry, 1660–1800," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 31, nos. 1–2 (1997): 58–73.

Hope brothers paid the costs of the transport of indigo from Saint-Domingue to Curaçao.<sup>70</sup>

Detailed information is available regarding two Curaçaoan companies, which will provide some insights into the multiplicity of commercial contacts that existed between the Dutch island, on the one hand, and Europe and the Americas, on the other. One of these two companies was co-founded by Isaac Faesch (1687–1758), a Swiss native who was Curaçao's governor from 1740 through 1758. After fighting on both sides during the War of the Spanish Succession, Faesch joined the company of his brother Johann Rudolf in Amsterdam. Their activities included the dispatch of French and Dutch textiles to the Caribbean. After his brother's premature death in 1718, Isaac continued the business with his widowed sister-in-law, but lost most of its capital by speculating in shares of the *Compagnie d'Occident*, a joint-stock company that had received monopoly trading rights in the Caribbean and North America from the French government. As profits could not keep up with speculation in the company's shares, in 1720 the bubble burst. Isaac's fortunes changed after he took up his duties at the Dutch West India Company and his appointment as commander of St. Eustatius. En route to his destination, Faesch met Johann Jakob Hoffmann, a fellow native of Basel, whom he may have known before. Hoffmann was on his way to become the secretary of the neighboring Dutch colony of St. Martin, but beyond his administrative expertise, he had unmistakable commercial talents as well. The two soon joined hands as business associates and founded a company on St. Eustatius. Following Faesch's appointment as governor of Curaçao in 1740, they dissolved their company. Hoffmann became the company's front man, since Faesch was told by the West India Company to discontinue his commercial pursuits.<sup>71</sup> During the next two years, Hoffmann displayed tremendous commercial activity before returning to Europe and leaving the company to Isaac's nephew, the son of the governor's merchant brother.

It was men like Faesch and Hoffmann who constructed the ever closer commercial ties between Curaçao and the French West Indies. Both men were agents for firms in Amsterdam, Haarlem, and Leiden, receiving their products

70 Chassaigne, "L'économie des îles sucrières," 101.

71 The prohibition did not convince the governor to abandon his commercial pursuits. It seems more than a little suspicious that over 60,000 pesos were found among his possessions upon his death: Han Jordaen, "James Love en 'des Zwitser's hand': Van kaapvaart, contrebande en geruchten van corruptie," in *Caraïbische cadens: Liber Amicorum opgedragen aan de Gevolmachtigde Minister van de Nederlandse Antillen*, ed. Henny E. Coomans, Maritza Coomans-Eustatia, and Peter Prins (Bloemendaal: Stichting Libri Antilliani, 1995), 258–65, 264.

on consignment and selling them in Curaçao or sending them on to their own agents on other Dutch islands. Alongside their commission business, both men exported colonial American crops for their own account, which they sent to Amsterdam. There, they maintained commissioners who sold on commission. The crops included sugar from Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Saint-Domingue, tobacco from Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, and St. Vincent, coffee from Guadeloupe and Martinique, and cacao from Venezuela. In addition, the couple from Basel arranged for the sale of these same products to the Dutch Republic for the account of locally established Dutch merchants. On behalf of French merchants, they also sold products from Guadeloupe and Martinique in Amsterdam. In addition, Hoffmann was involved in purchasing slaves from the British islands, planning at one point to bypass the tax on slaves who arrived in Willemstad by dressing the slaves up as sailors. Hoffmann frequently acted as an agent of the Dutch merchants in St. Eustatius, on whose orders he sold goods they had received directly or indirectly from Europe and North America, in particular provisions such as meat, bacon, flour, oranges, and potatoes. At the same time, Hoffmann purchased cacao, hides, and mules for the Statians, which they then resold. Hoffmann seems to have been involved in virtually every imaginable commercial pursuit. He was an intermediary in the sale of ships, provided vessels in transit with provisions, paid crews' wages on behalf of his superiors, and took part in the money changing business. And, finally, Faesch and Hoffmann were active in brokerage and in the insurance business, insuring both regular inter-Caribbean trade and smuggling ventures by Curaçaoan and French West Indian vessels.

The sale of European products on Curaçao and the re-export of American products to Europe were parallel worlds, although they were not each other's mirror image. Most re-exported crops originated in French America, while Spanish America was the main destination for most European manufactures introduced on Curaçao. Faesch and Hoffmann themselves were not involved in the illicit trade with the Spanish colonies, preferring to sell the manufactures to a wide variety of small shipowners who sent their own vessels to the shores of Spanish America.

These manufactures imported from the Republic were varied. Textiles formed the main category, especially linen and woolen materials. Fine linen originating in France and Flanders, coarse Dutch linen, and decorated linen from Silesia and Bohemia called *platillas* were all destined to find a ready market in the Spanish colonies. Luxury products included white satin, black satin crêpe, grey silk fabric, as well as richly decorative brocades made in silk fabric and embroidered with gold and silver, garters, hats, and buttons with threads of gold and silver. For a larger clientele, both locally and foreign, Faesch and

Hoffmann also procured hawsers, sailcloth, mirrors, brandy, Madeira wine, provisions, and spices from the East Indies. They obtained some of these items from the company where Faesch had worked in Amsterdam, the same one that sold sugar and tobacco for Faesch and Hoffmann in Amsterdam.<sup>72</sup>

In 1778, a few decades after Hoffmann's whirlwind Caribbean career, another European merchant moved to Curaçao. Pierre Brion (c.1751–1799), born in a village near Liège and raised in Amsterdam, arrived in Willemstad as the factor of the Amsterdam-based firm Turri & Co. (later succeeded by Tonella & Co.). In due course, Brion came to represent four other Amsterdam companies. Apart from loading ships sailing exclusively for Turri & Co., Brion organized the shipment of company goods on other vessels leaving Amsterdam for Curaçao. In the Caribbean, he developed ties to virtually every major port on the Spanish Main, including Cumaná, La Guaira (and nearby Caracas), Coro, Río Hacha, Santa Marta, Maracaibo, and Cartagena, as well as with a few ports in Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico, and Saint-Domingue, Especially Cap Français, Les Cayes, and Jacmel. In 1781 alone, two vessels that Brion had fitted out for the Curaçao-Cap Français run were captured by English privateers. In the last years of his life, when his reputation earned him a position on the island's council, he added contacts in St. Thomas and ports on the Eastern seaboard of the United States.<sup>73</sup> In the wide range of his endeavors, Brion resembled Hoffmann. He bought and sold ships (and, on one occasion, gunpowder) across imperial borders, collected debts in foreign colonies on behalf of other foreigners, and assumed the administration of one Curaçaoan plantation.<sup>74</sup>

In the year before he moved to Curaçao, Brion – already in the employ of Turri & Co. – had visited the two brothers Joseph Anton and Peter Paul Obwexer in Augsburg, who ran a banking firm that had branched out into the textile business, buying textiles throughout Germany and running a cotton factory. The company hired Brion as their factor on Curaçao, using Turri & Co. as their agents in Amsterdam.<sup>75</sup> One of Brion's main tasks was to determine which manufactures Obwexer had to send in order to buy the usual New World

72 Bodmer, "Tropenkaufleute und Plantagenbesitzer," 290–305.

73 Mark Häberlein and Michaela Schmölz-Häberlein, *Die Erben der Welser: Der Karibikhandel der Augsburger Firma Obwexer im Zeitalter der Revolutionen*, Studien zur Geschichte des Bayerischen Schwabens 21 (Augsburg: Dr. Bernd Wißner, 1995), 65, 87–94, 102–104.

74 Ibid., 89–90, 92.

75 Obwexer was not the first German textile firm to forge a connection to Curaçao. Abraham Dürninger & Co. from Herrnhut in Saxony, a leading linen exporter, maintained a warehouse in Willemstad: Jörg Ludwig, *Der Handel Sachsens nach Spanien und Lateinamerika, 1760–1830: Warenexport, Unternehmerinteressen und staatliche Politik* (Leipzig: Nouvelle Alliance, 1994), 75, 124.

products of cacao, tobacco, sugar, coffee, and hides, but also cotton and indigo. He kept himself abreast of changes in fashion in the Spanish and French colonies, describing in detail in two letters from 1780 the types of printed cottons of which he wanted to order two chests. The best colors for this fabric printed in a floral pattern were, he argued, dark violet, pink, red, blue, and coffee brown. Another chest of cottons had to be printed in very fine brocade patterns with stripes that were not too wide, and moderately priced, since the brocade fashion was fading. On this occasion alone, Brion ordered 15 chests of printed cottons, 11 chests of calicoes, and eight chests and 900 pieces of other cottons.<sup>76</sup>

### Curaçaoan Mobility

By the mid-eighteenth century, Willemstad's wharves lined "both sides of the bay deep into the interior, well past the fort and port complex at the harbor entrance," to accommodate the expanding shipping traffic.<sup>77</sup> Population growth had accompanied the port's development. In the 1660s, the population had been so small that the arrival of a slaver put a serious strain on the food supply, since the residents had to share the provisions with the disembarked Africans.<sup>78</sup> It was not until the early eighteenth century that the town, which in the past had been overshadowed by the military base, transformed into a full-fledged port city. In 1789, when Curaçao's only eighteenth-century census was taken, 11,543 people called the city home, making it the nineteenth port city in Atlantic America, substantially smaller than Havana, Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, similar in size to the estimated population of Paramaribo, and more or less comparable to Charleston or Cartagena de Indias (Table 1.1). At the same time, Willemstad was the seventh port in the insular Caribbean, smaller only than Havana, Kingston, Cap Français, Santiago de Cuba, and Bridgetown, larger than Santo Domingo, Port-au-Prince, and San Juan (Puerto Rico) (Table 1.2), and much larger than Oranjestad. Most of these ports had seen their populations grow in the same period, from the late seventeenth to the late eighteenth century.

<sup>76</sup> Häberlein and Schmölz-Häberlein, *Erben der Welser*, 19, 60–62.

<sup>77</sup> Linda M. Rupert, *Creolization and Contraband: Curaçao in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Athens, Ga. and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2012), 129.

<sup>78</sup> Resolution, wtc Chamber of Amsterdam, 13 June 1669, in *Documenten behoorende bij 'De Nederlanders op de West-Indische Eilanden'*, ed. J.H.J. Hamelberg, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: De Bussy, 1901–03), 1,83.



Attention has traditionally focused on the activities of merchants in shaping Curaçao's transit center. As organizers of trading ventures, they provided the island with an economic foundation, and did so in the face of multiple challenges. When Johann Hoffmann returned to the Old World in 1742, he considered a young man with a job in Europe infinitely happier than the foremost merchant in the Americas, where fortunes were no longer made so fast.<sup>79</sup> The merchants were, of course, not alone in constructing Curaçao's commercial world. Sailors, fishermen, caulkers, dockhands, warehouse workers, and sail-makers were all needed to keep the entrepôt afloat. As the eighteenth century advanced, more and more blacks and colored men held these jobs and by mid-century, slaves came to dominate the port-related occupations. Members of the island's ruling Council estimated as early as 1741 that two-thirds of the sailors were either slaves or free people of color, a share that only increased in the decades ahead.<sup>80</sup>

TABLE 1.1 *Top Twenty Port City Populations of Atlantic America, circa 1790.*

Port	Inhabitants	Date
Havana	44,337	1791
Salvador	39,209	1780
Rio de Janeiro	38,707	1780
New York	33,131	1790
Buenos Aires	29,920*	1778
Philadelphia	28,522	1790
Kingston	26,478	1788
Saint-Pierre (Martinique)	20,000*	1788
Boston	18,320	1790
Recife	18,207	1776
Campeche	18,000*	1766
Charleston	16,359	1790
Cap Français	15,696	1788
Santiago de Cuba	15,000*	1792
Bridgetown (Barbados)	14,000*	1773

79 Bodmer, "Tropenkaufleute und Plantagenbesitzer," 305.

80 NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 588, fol. 890, information provided by delegates of the Council of Curaçao, J.G. Pax, Johannes Stuijlingh, and Jan van Schagen, 18 June 1741.

TABLE 1.1 *Top Twenty Port City Populations of Atlantic America, ca. 1790. (cont.)*

Veracruz	14,000*	1790
Cartagena de Indias	13,690	1777
Baltimore	13,530	1790
Paramaribo	11,760*	1791
Willemstad	11,543	1789

The population figures with an asterisk are estimates.

Sources: Havana: María Dolores González-Ripoll Navarro, *Cuba, isla de los ensayos: Cultura y sociedad (1790–1815)* (Madrid: CSIC, 2000), 109; Salvador: A.J.R. Russell-Wood, "Ports of Colonial Brazil," in *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650–1850*, ed. Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 196–239, 222; Rio de Janeiro and Recife: Jacob M. Price, "Summation: The American Panorama of Atlantic Port Cities," in *Atlantic Port Cities*, ed. Knight and Liss, 262–76, 263; New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and Salem: United States census of 1790: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab02.txt>; Buenos Aires: Lyman L. Johnson, "Estimaciones de la población de Buenos Aires en 1744, 1778 y 1810," *Desarrollo Económico* 19, no. 73 (April–June 1979): 107–119; Kingston: Emma Hart and Trevor Burnard, "Kingston, Jamaica, and Charleston, South Carolina: A New Look at Comparative Urbanization in Plantation Colonial British America," *The Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 2 (March 2013): 214–234, 7; Saint-Pierre: Frédéric Régent, *La France et ses esclaves: de la colonization aux abolitions (1620–1848)* (Paris: Éditions Grasset & Frasquelle, 2007), 120; Campeche: Adriana Delfina Rocher Salas, "Religiosidad e identidad en San Francisco de Campeche. Siglos XVI y XVII," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 63, no. 2 (2006): 27–47, 44, no. 39; Cap Français: Paul Butel, *Histoire des Antilles françaises, XVII<sup>e</sup>–XX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (s.l.: Perrin, 2002), 190; Santiago de Cuba: Leví Marrero, *Cuba: economía y sociedad. Azúcar, Ilustración y conciencia (1763–1788)* (Madrid: Editorial Playor, 1983), 147; Bridgetown: Pedro L.V. Welch, *Slave Society in the City: Bridgetown, Barbados, 1680–1834* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers & Oxford: James Currey Publishers, 2003), 53; Veracruz: my calculation, based on Jackie R. Booker, *Veracruz Merchants, 1770–1829: A Mercantile Elite in Late Bourbon and Early Independent Mexico* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1993), 7; Cartagena de Indias: Manuel Lucena Giraldo, *A los cuatro vientos: Las ciudades de la América hispánica* (Madrid: Fundación Carolina Centro de Estudios Hispánicos e Iberoamericanos, Marcial Pons Historia, 2006), 141; Paramaribo: Cornelis Ch. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas 1680–1791* (Assen, Maastricht and Dover, New Hampshire: Van Gorcum, 1985), 519; Willemstad: Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches: Dutch Trade in the Caribbean, 1648–1795* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1998), 61; In 1790, São Paulo and adjacent parishes had over 8000 inhabitants: Richard M. Morse, *From Community to Metropolis: A Biography of São Paulo, Brazil* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1958), 30.

TABLE 1.2 *Top Ten Port City Populations of the Insular Caribbean, ca. 1790.*

Port	Inhabitants	Date
Havana	44,337	1791
Kingston	26,478	1788
Saint-Pierre	20,000*	1788
Cap Français	15,696	1788
Santiago de Cuba	15,000*	1792
Bridgetown	14,000*	1773
Willemstad	11,543	1789
Santo Domingo	10,702	1782–1783
Port-au-Prince	6200	1789
San Juan	6005	1771

The population figures with an asterisk are estimates.

Sources: see Table 1.1; San Juan: Bibiano Torres Ramírez, *La isla de Puerto Rico (1765–1800)* (San Juan de Puerto Rico: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1968), 16; Santo Domingo: María Rosario Sevilla Soler, *Santo Domingo Tierra de Frontera (1750–1800)* (Sevilla: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, 1980), 35; Port-au-Prince: David Geggus, “The Major Port Towns of Saint Domingue in the Later Eighteenth Century,” in *Atlantic Port Cities*, ed. Knight and Liss, 87–116, 108.

Although blacks working in the maritime economy often did not work under close supervision of their masters, they still longed for more autonomy. The maritime economy itself helped them escape from slavery. Since the island was too small to accommodate viable maroon communities, maritime flight offered the only alternative. Stealing a boat and rowing to Venezuela was the main route to freedom, especially since slaves were declared free upon arrival if they announced their willingness to convert to Catholicism. Other black sailors simply absconded during trading voyages.<sup>81</sup> Still, most slaves traveling on board trading vessels stayed put. One of these slaves, a man named Jean, accompanied his master, the merchant David Senior, to Cap Français in June 1793, when, on the 20th of that month, one of the landmark events of the Haitian Revolution took place. That day saw street fighting between whites and colored people, slaves being freed from jails, and multiple fires spreading

81 Linda M. Rupert, “Marronage, Manumission and Maritime Trade in the Early Modern Caribbean,” *Slavery & Abolition* 30, no. 3 (2009), 361–382, 364.

through the city. Jean apparently protected his master and was rewarded with manumission two weeks later.<sup>82</sup>

Curaçao's government repeatedly took precautions to prevent slaves from fleeing. A law from 1742 made it illegal for captains sailing from Curaçao to take on blacks and mulattoes who failed to produce a document that proved their freedom. The law was at odds with the practice of many urban slaveholders to employ their slaves on board the trading vessels. This was in itself risky, since capture by a Spanish coastguard vessel might result in the auctioning off not only of the ship and the trade goods, but of enslaved crew members.<sup>83</sup> The slaveholders' solution was to issue temporary manumissions, which offered slaves protection against pirates and privateers, and shielded their owners from the loss of their human property. Linda Rupert has found 153 such *pro forma* manumissions for the period 1741–1775.<sup>84</sup>

The main destination of maritime maroons was Coro in Venezuela, where over the course of the century countless enslaved Curaçaoans embraced a life of freedom upon formal conversion to Catholicism.<sup>85</sup> In the year 1774 alone, with Curaçao facing a severe food crisis, 140 slaves succeeded in escaping from the island to Coro. That number could have been even higher if the massive flight attempted by all 72 slaves from the *de Fuijk* plantation in October of that year had been crowned with success. The large canoe that they stole to make their way to Coro was, however, spotted by watchmen who started yelling and were soon joined by some fishermen. The slaves then went back ashore and withdrew to the woods. Most were eventually captured and many were sold to Saint-Domingue.<sup>86</sup> By the closing years of the century, no fewer than 400 former Curaçaoans lived in the Southern part of the Venezuelan town, while other refugees had moved on to nearby mountainous terrain or runaway communities.<sup>87</sup> Nor did they relinquish their ties to what had often been their native island. Various

82 Van der Lee, *Curaçaose vrijbrieven*, 288.

83 From 1730 through 1737, at least 51 black and four mulatto Curaçaoans were seized off the Venezuelan coast by coastguard ships fitted out by the Compañía Guipuzcoana: NL-HaNA 1.05.12.01, Curaçao, Bonaire en Aruba tot 1828, inv. no. 806, fols. 622ff, Notes from the Governor and Council, January–June 1747.

84 Rupert, "Marronage," 370–372.

85 Many – if not most – of them were already Catholics upon arrival, but the local priests were probably unaware of this.

86 NL-HaNA, W1C, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 1166, fol. 17, Governor Jean Rodier to the W1C, Chamber of Amsterdam, Curaçao, 10 January 1775.

87 Lucas Guillermo Castillo Lara, *Curiepe: Orígenes históricos* (Caracas: n.p., 1981), 61, 285. Ramón Aizpurua, "En torno a la aparición de un pueblo de esclavos fugitivos de Curazao en

religious brotherhoods in both places maintained close ties in the 1760s and 1770s, one of which in Coro sent delegates to the Dutch island to collect alms from their brothers.<sup>88</sup>

Although Venezuelan slaves rarely went in the opposite direction, perhaps the most notorious person in their midst did flee to Curaçao. Andresote, a man described as a maroon, rallied a large group of Indians and runaway slaves in the early 1730s, allegedly committing crimes in defiance of the authorities, who attempted to root out the contraband trade with Curaçao.<sup>89</sup> Andresote's followers included blacks from Coro who had successfully escaped from the Dutch island. Shielded by armed Curaçaoan traders, Andresote fled from Venezuela to Curaçao, where he was described several years later as a runaway, who had committed murders and other crimes. As before in Venezuela, he counted many maroons among his supporters.<sup>90</sup>

Most slaves were not so fortunate to find freedom. They spent their lives in bondage on Curaçao or were shipped off to other parts of the Caribbean. Once they moved to foreign soils, exported slaves usually stopped leaving traces. Only during extraordinary circumstances, especially insurgencies, do we find references to slaves from Curaçao, and presumably only to those born on the island. One of the suspects in the 1741 conspiracy in New York City was Curacoa Dick. Although his master, the Dutch American Cornelius Tiebout, testified on his behalf, he was sentenced with three others to be burnt at the stake.<sup>91</sup> Curaçaoans were also found among maroons in South Carolina, Saint-Domingue, and Santo Domingo.<sup>92</sup> Natives of Curaçao who turned maroon in

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la Sierra de Coro en el siglo XVIII," *Boletín de la Academia Nacional de la Historia* [Caracas], 87–345 (2004): 109–28.

88 Rupert, *Creolization and Contraband*, 179.

89 Carlos Felice Cardot, *La rebelión de Andresote (Valles de Yaracuy, 1730–1733): Discurso de recepción como individuo de número de la Academia Nacional de la Historia* (Caracas: Impr. Nacional, 1952). Another case involving a flight from Venezuela to Curaçao ended badly for the slave in question. On Curaçao the refugee, Juan Inocencio, earned his living as a sailor but when his vessel reached Chuao in 1772 and he went ashore, he was recognized as having fled from that town and put in chains: Carlos Salazar et al., *La Obra Pía de Chuao 1568–1825* (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1968), 349.

90 Klooster, *Illicit Riches*, 153–154.

91 Thomas J. Davis, *A Rumor of Revolt: The "Great Negro Plot" in Colonial New York* (New York: The Free Press and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1985), 65, 121. This conspiracy probably only existed in the imagination of the white population: Philip D. Morgan, "Conspiracy Scares," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 59, no. 1 (January 2002): 164–165.

92 Perry L. Kyles, "Resistance and Collaboration: Political Strategies within the Afro-Carolinian Slave Community, 1700–1750," *The Journal of African American History* 93, no. 4

Saint-Domingue probably included Marie, a woman described as “Dutch.” She escaped from her master, an apothecary on board a ship in Cap François, when she was eight months pregnant.<sup>93</sup> In Santo Domingo, runaways joined the exclusively male floating population of a runaway logwood community, where they were described in the year 1790 as living “without God, law or King.” During the 1795 Pointe Coupée conspiracy in Louisiana, a creole slave from Curaçao encouraged slaves to rebel by telling the story that “they are awaiting at the Capital an Order of the King which declares all the slaves free...”<sup>94</sup> Finally, a slave named José María Curazao informed the overseer of a Cuban sugar mill in 1798 about an imminent slave insurrection. Among the leaders of the revolt were apparently, once again, Curaçaoans.<sup>95</sup>

Like their enslaved brother and sisters, free Curaçaoans of color were remarkably mobile, sojourning and settling in a variety of foreign colonies.<sup>96</sup> One of them took part in the British siege of Havana in 1762. Towards the end of the siege, the “sailor Francisco Antonio, a black man from Curaçao” was listed as one of the deserters of the expedition that the Spanish kept in jail.<sup>97</sup> Most of these itinerant men and women traveled individually, but at least in one place, a large group of Curaçao-born blacks and mulattoes settled down. A total of 156 of them lived on the Danish island of St. Thomas in 1803, representing the largest contingent of people of color not native to that island, with native Statians occupying third place. The women in their midst listed

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(Fall 2008): 502. Bernard Foubert, “Le marronage sur les habitations Laborde à Saint-Domingue dans la seconde moitié du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l’Ouest* 95, no. 3 (1988): 277–310, 287. Martín Lienhard, *Disidentes, rebeldes, insurgentes: Resistencia indígena y negra en América Latina. Ensayos de historia testimonial* (Frankfurt: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2008), 97–98.

93 Jason Daniels, “Recovering the Fugitive History of *Marronage* in Saint-Domingue, 1770–1791,” *Journal of Caribbean History* 46, no. 2 (2012): 134–35.

94 Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, London: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 352.

95 María Dolores González-Ripoll, Consuelo Naranjo, Ada Ferrer, Gloria García, and Josef Opatrný, *El rumor de Haití en Cuba: temor, raza y rebeldía, 1789–1844* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2004), 280.

96 For the free people of color in general, see Wim Klooster, “Subordinate but Proud: Curaçao’s Free Blacks and Mulattoes in the Eighteenth Century,” *New West Indian Guide/Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 68, nos. 3–4 (1994): 283–300; Han Jordaan, “Free Blacks and Coloreds in the Administration of Justice in Eighteenth-Century Curaçao,” *New West Indian Guide* 84, nos. 1–2 (2010): 63–86.

97 Elena Schneider, “The Occupation of Havana: War, Trade, and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Cuba,” (unpublished PhD diss., Princeton University, 2011), 230.

themselves as seamstresses and cooks, but were in reality petty traders whose knowledge of Spanish and Spanish customs served them well.<sup>98</sup>

The trading routes also enabled free blacks and mulattoes from other parts of the Caribbean to make their way to Curaçao. Those from Spanish-speaking areas came to squat on plantations and on the *conucos*, the small plots of land cultivated by free and enslaved Curaçaoans. On various occasions, the government took action against them by forcing them to help repair the main fort or threatening them with forced labor if they did not leave within two weeks.<sup>99</sup> Alternatively, the authorities used the free foreign non-whites to boost the militia ranks.<sup>100</sup>

### Conclusion

The main commercial development in eighteenth-century Curaçao was the intensification of contacts with the French Caribbean. While merchants in metropolitan Dutch ports and their Curaçaoan correspondents had previously used the island primarily as a gateway to the Spanish American markets, they now discovered the possibilities of trade with Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Saint-Domingue, producers of vast amounts of sugar, coffee, and indigo. Traders on Curaçao itself sent vessels to these colonies and devised an original way to tap French colonial markets by using their long-established contacts on the Spanish Main to transport mules to the French islands, where these animals propelled the sugar mills.

98 David W. Knight and Laurette de T. Prime, eds., *St. Thomas 1803: Crossroads of the Diaspora (The 1803 Proceedings and Register of the Free Colored)* (St. Thomas, United States Virgin Islands: Little Nordside Press, 1999); Neville A.T. Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St. Thomas, St. John, St. Croix*, ed. B.W. Higman (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 180–181.

99 NL-HaNA, W1C, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 1156, fol. 64, Juan Pedro van Collen to the W1C Board, Curaçao, 31 May 1737. Placards of 2 April 1731 and 24 October 1743, in *West Indisch Plakaatboek: Publikaties an andere wetten alsmede de oudste resoluties betreffende hebbende op Curaçao, Aruba, Bonaire*, 2 vols., ed. J.A. Schiltkamp and J.Th. de Smidt (Amsterdam: Emmering, 1978), 1:156, 234. Spanish-speaking whites who did not report to the authorities would be deported to their colonies of origin: Lucas Guillermo Castillo Lara, *La aventura fundacional de los isleños: Panaquire y Juan Francisco de León* (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1983), 497.

100 Placards of 4 March and 20 May 1761, in Schiltkamp and De Smidt, *West Indisch Plakaatboek*, 1:290. See also NL-HaNA, W1C, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 603, fols. 1193–1194.

Old and new trading routes alike did not only convey commodities. They also enabled the mobility of the crews of the numerous sloops and schooners owned by islanders, and of free people who could afford the costs of their passage. And while Curaçaoan vessels continued to transport bonded Africans for sale throughout the Caribbean, blacks used the same shipping lanes to escape their enslavement. If, then, for some, the island's interconnectedness offered the promise of profit, for others it signaled the hope of a better life.



# Paramaribo as Dutch and Atlantic Nodal Point, 1650–1795

*Karwan Fatah-Black*

## Introduction

The *Sociëteit van Suriname* (Suriname Company, 1683–1795) aimed to turn Suriname into a plantation colony to produce tropical products for Dutch merchants, and simultaneously provide a market for finished products and stimulate the shipping industry.<sup>1</sup> To maximize profits for the Republic the charter of the colony banned merchants from outside the Republic from connecting to the colony's markets. The strict mercantilist vision of the Dutch on how the tropical plantation colony should benefit the metropolis failed to materialize, and many non-Dutch traders serviced the colony's markets.<sup>2</sup> The significant breaches in the mercantilist plans of the Dutch signify the limits of metropolitan control over the colonial project.

This chapter takes ship movements to and from Paramaribo as a very basic indication for breaches in the mercantilist plans of the Dutch: the more non-Dutch ships serviced Suriname relative to the number of Dutch ships, the less successful the Suriname Company was in realizing its “walled garden” concept of the colony. While Suriname had three European villages (Torarica, Jodensavanne and Paramaribo) in the seventeenth century, Paramaribo became its sole urban core in the eighteenth century. This centralization and

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\* The research done for this chapter was first presented in a paper at the European Social Science and History Conference 2010 in Ghent and figures prominently in the PhD dissertation *Suriname and the Atlantic World, 1650–1800* defended on 1 October 2013 at Leiden University.

- 1 *Octroy ofte fundamentele conditien, onder de welcke haer Hoogh. Mog. ten besten en voordeele van de Ingezetenen deser Landen de Colonie van Suriname hebben doen vallen in handen ende onder directie van de bewindthebberen van de generale Nederlandsche Geoctroyeerde West-Indische Compagnie* (Jacobus Scheltus, 1682); *Conditien, tussen de Dry Respective Leden van de Societeyt van Suriname, geconvenieert in dato 21 May, 1683* (Amsterdam: Erfgenamen Paulus Matthysz, 1683).
- 2 Johannes Postma, “Breaching the Mercantile Barriers of the Dutch Colonial Empire: North American Trade with Surinam During the Eighteenth Century,” in *Merchant Organization and Maritime Trade in the North Atlantic, 1660–1815*, ed. Olaf Uwe Janzen, vol. 15, Research in Maritime History (St. John's, Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, 1998), 107–131.

urbanization was mainly due to the town's location near to where Suriname's main waterways flow into the Atlantic. This made the town both central to local, regional and transatlantic shipping routes.<sup>3</sup> Sailing ships were able to go much further upstream to Torarica, Jodensavanne and many of the plantations, but this was rather unpractical given the strong currents and the great influence of the tide on the rivers. An analysis of ship movement to and from Paramaribo over a long period not only shows that the Dutch were not able to close off the colony at any time during the seventeenth and eighteenth century, but also that there were periods when they had more exclusive access to the colony than in others.

Obviously, ship movements do not denote either tonnage or value. The ships in the regional trade were about a fifth of the size of the trans-Oceanic freighters that sailed between Suriname and the Dutch Republic.<sup>4</sup> However, given the absence of major technological divergence between intra-American and transatlantic shipping during the period, the relative numbers of Dutch versus non-Dutch ships give an indication of their relative importance to the colony. This chapter shows that while formal rules and regulations issued by metropolitan and local governmental bodies had some impact on trade and shipping, changes in credit systems that were used to finance plantations were a more significant determinant of the success of Dutch attempts at excluding non-Dutch shipping from the colony. The mercantilist scheme for the plantation colony only functioned when the Republic had the financial instruments to enforce control.

Historians of the British Atlantic have fairly well established the extent to which Atlantic trade networks crossed formal imperial boundaries.<sup>5</sup> By taking the case of Suriname, the largest plantation colony in the Atlantic under Dutch rule, this contribution seeks to investigate the Dutch side of this system and argue that intercolonial networks were constitutive for the colony, that colonists and merchants found ways to cooperate and circumvent the rules and regulations, and that over the course of the eighteenth century prevailing credit systems impacted the salience of intercolonial shipping. The study

3 Karwan Fatah-Black, "Suriname and the Atlantic World, 1650–1800" (unpublished PhD diss., Leiden University, 2013), chapter 4.

4 For the period 1770–1793 the average size of the cargo on regional ships was 29.3 lasts (a last is approximately two tons or 4000 pounds). In the freight shipping between Suriname and the Dutch Republic the average cargo was 146.55 lasts. J.P. van de Voort, *De Westindische plantages van 1720 tot 1795. Financiën en handel* (unpublished PhD diss., Catholic University of Nijmegen, 1973), 242; Fatah-Black, "Suriname and the Atlantic World," appendix.

5 See for example the articles by David Hancock and John McCusker in *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy*, ed. John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

shows (1) how central intercolonial exchange was to the colonial project, (2) that the connectors between the colonies were not the prototypical Dutch middlemen, and (3) that Dutch metropolitan-led state institutions had only limited success in regulating the trade routes between Suriname and the Atlantic world.

### Plantation Colonies in the Dutch Atlantic

In the Dutch historical literature on early modern Suriname the overwhelming dominance of the connection between Suriname and the Netherlands is taken for granted.<sup>6</sup> And even though the existence of regional connections from Suriname has not been denied, these have not received a lot of attention from historians. The first scholar to take a detailed look at these connections was Johannes Postma, and in two articles he uncovered a world of connections, mainly operated by non-Dutch ships connecting the plantation colony to the Caribbean and especially to North America. In terms of figures and shipping data Johannes Postma has done groundbreaking work in this field by showing how multifaceted the connections between Suriname and the Atlantic world were. He showed that half the ships in Paramaribo in the eighteenth century were non-Dutch and hailed from non-Dutch ports.<sup>7</sup> The data that he collected is presented in Graph 1. Given the cliché of the Dutch as middlemen in the Atlantic world and the mercantilist regulations that were to control shipping, it might therefore come as a surprise that Dutch shipping was not the only supplier of goods to Suriname. A second surprise in this regard will be that the colonists were banned from fitting out ships from the colony to regional destinations, even if they were Dutch. This is a world away from nodal points such as Curaçao and St. Eustatius where intercolonial connections were encouraged by the Dutch West India Company (WIC).

The importance of non-Dutch shipping for Dutch Atlantic colonies contradicts the prevailing image of the Dutch, who have often been praised for their role as intermediaries between the empires in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Piet Emmer summed up Dutch Atlantic activities as turning from

6 Karwan Fatah-Black, "Suriname en de wereld, 1650–1800: Een Atlantisch en mondiaal perspectief," *OSO – Tijdschrift voor Surinamistiek en het Caraïbisch gebied* 31, no. 2 (2013): 177–191.

7 Postma, "Breaching the Mercantile," 107–131.; Johannes Postma, "Suriname and its Atlantic Connections, 1667–1795," in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585–1817*, ed. Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (Leiden Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2003), 287–322.

“aggressive and expensive” to profiting “from a neutral position *vis-à-vis* the imperial rivalries.”<sup>8</sup> As the debate on the Dutch Atlantic progressed many have argued that the Dutch presence in the Atlantic remained sizeable, but mainly in areas of shipping and trade.<sup>9</sup> Jan de Vries has emphasized that after the loss of Brazil the Dutch Atlantic activities did not simply retreat into shipping between imperial rivals and some plantation colonies were developed in the Guianas, but that the most notable development has been the increase in New World trade after 1680.<sup>10</sup> The Dutch shipping that developed was more transatlantic than intercolonial.

As de Vries noted there was a tension in such an arrangement, because “the administrators represented the trading interests of the company and of the Republic more generally” and they were finding themselves “frequently at odds with the interests of settlers.”<sup>11</sup> This tension between settlers and administrators surfaced in the area of trade and shipping because of the apparent limits to Dutch freight shipping in the Atlantic. This limit was a new problem to the Dutch, for as Christian Koot discusses in this volume, the Dutch had been the ones providing cheap and versatile shipping services to the nascent English colonies in the Atlantic world. In the late seventeenth and eighteenth century Dutch actors remained eager to ship products across the ocean, but became unable or unwilling to profitably service the short shipping lines between American colonies that were needed to provision daily supplies or haul low value bulk goods such as molasses. Therefore – as Postma has shown for Suriname and Gert Oostindie for Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo – non-Dutch connections played an important role in expanding plantation production in Dutch colonies.<sup>12</sup> The result of this was that the Dutch colonies in the Atlantic had a nodal character. They were places where actors from a range of European

8 P.C. Emmer, “‘Jesus Christ was Good but Trade was Better’: An Overview of the Transit Trade of the Dutch Antilles, 1634–1795,” in *The Dutch in the Atlantic Economy, 1580–1880*, ed. P.C. Emmer (Aldershot: Ashgate 1998), 108–109.

9 Henk den Heijer and Victor Enthoven, “Nederland en de Atlantische wereld, 1600–1800. Een historiografisch overzicht,” *Tijdschrift voor Zeegeschiedenis* 24, no. 2 (2005): 147–166; Gert Oostindie and Jessica Vance Roitman, “Repositioning the Dutch in the Atlantic, 1680–1800,” *Itinerario* 36, no. 2 (2012): 129–160.

10 Jan de Vries, “The Dutch Atlantic Economies,” in *The Atlantic Economy During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel*, ed. Peter A. Coclanis (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 1–29, 12.

11 *Ibid.*, 13.

12 Gert Oostindie, “‘British Capital, Industry and Perseverance’ Versus Dutch ‘Old School’?: The Dutch Atlantic and the Takeover of Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo, 1750–1815,” *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 127, no. 4 (December 2012): 28–55.

and colonial backgrounds came to organize their business, despite metropolitan restrictions. But while the need for such connections were obvious from a colonial-entrepreneurial perspective, the metropolitan institutions were not eager to accept the colonial project as one where they should provide military and institutional security and let merchants and traders do as they please (Figure 2.1).

### Institutional Context

Suriname was not ruled by the WIC alone. The WIC had been founded in 1621, and after a bankruptcy it was restarted in 1674 as the second WIC. The Company transformed from a combative Calvinist organization set up to sabotage Iberian-Atlantic power into a (slave) trade organization, and later one that mainly generated income from levying taxes on Atlantic voyages by private companies. During the second WIC it did rule several colonies, but these were mostly trading posts, rather than plantation or settler colonies. Despite their formal monopoly over the entire Atlantic Westwards of the Cape Colony in

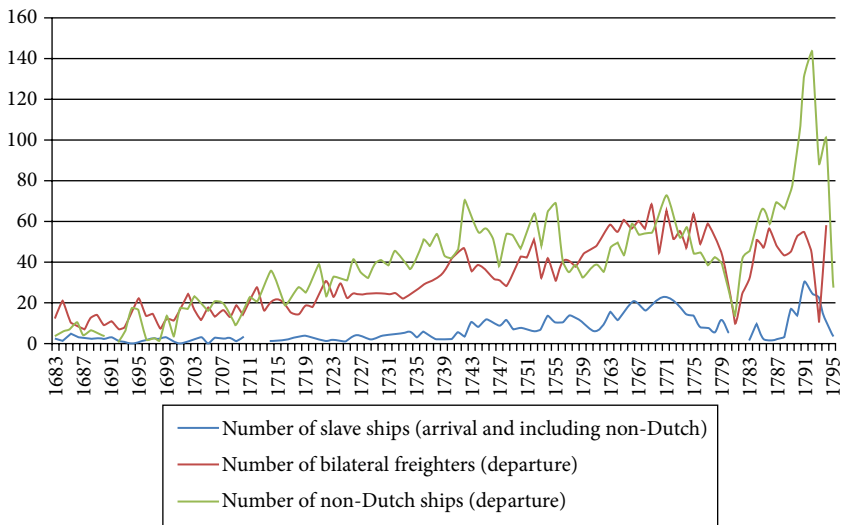


FIGURE 2.1 *Number of ships per year in Paramaribo (slavers, Dutch freighters and non-Dutch ships), 1683–1795.*

SOURCE: DUTCH ATLANTIC CONNECTIONS DATABASE ([HTTPS://EASY.DANS.KNAW.NL/UI/DATASETS/ID/EASY-DATASET:33898](https://easy.dans.knaw.nl/ui/datasets/id/easy-dataset:33898)) AND POSTMA, SURINAME NORTH AMERICAN DATA COLLECTION (PSNADC). SLAVE SHIPS MOSTLY ARRIVED DIRECTLY FROM AFRICA. THE BILATERAL FREIGHTERS SAILED DIRECTLY BETWEEN SURINAME AND THE DUTCH REPUBLIC. THE NON-DUTCH SHIPS WERE PREDOMINANTLY FROM NEW ENGLAND AND OFTEN RETURNED TO THE SAME PORT THEY HAD ARRIVED FROM.

Southern Africa, they out-sourced the set-up and management of plantations to private companies. One of these was the Suriname Company, which was chartered by the Dutch States General and consisted of three parties, who all had an equal share, and delegated directors to oversee the colony. The three parties which made up the Suriname Company in 1683 were the WIC, the city of Amsterdam and the family Aerssen van Sommelsdijck. That last party sold their share in the company in 1771, after which the WIC and Amsterdam both owned half the colony.

The Suriname Company had a different aim than the WIC had in the Atlantic. The directors bore the responsibility for striking a balance between gaining revenue from taxing shipping as well as privately owned plantations, and to simultaneously guarantee that there was a profitable business climate in which plantations could prosper. This meant that the planters should be provided with capital, land, labor and protection. At the same time the colony was set up with the idea of benefiting the Dutch Republic as a whole by increasing the shipping, trade and power of the republic. The charter of the colony of Suriname covered all these areas, and created a general outline that was followed for much of the period between its inception in 1683 and the disbanding of the Suriname Company in 1795.

The central ordinance that is of importance here is article XII from the 1682 charter, which reads:

That the trade and navigation on the aforementioned colony [Suriname] shall only take place directly from this country [the Republic]. Fruits, wares and produce are not allowed to go anywhere else than to this country. The same goes for the provisions needed by said colony. They can only come from this country, and from nowhere else.<sup>13</sup>

The article in the charter is clear in this respect, and for the directors this was not just lip service to the interests of their fellow countrymen. The first governor who ruled the colony for the Suriname Company reported in his letters that he indeed tried to prevent non-Dutch ships trading in the colony. Also, in the following decades several committees discussed how to preserve the XIIth article of the charter despite infringement by North-American vessels. In the end article XII did not hold, and the Suriname Company directors moved to issue a bylaw in 1704 that allowed limited trade by non-Dutch captains.<sup>14</sup> The Suriname Company did

<sup>13</sup> *Octroy ofte fundamentele conditien*, 9.

<sup>14</sup> J.A. Schiltkamp and J.Th. de Smidt, eds., *West Indisch Plakaatboek* (Amsterdam: Emmering, 1973), 253–255.

maintain the ban on Suriname-based regional trade until 1783 when the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780–1784) forced the colonists to rely on regional supply lines and they were allowed to fit out their own vessels.<sup>15</sup> The Suriname Company clearly had a rather different stance on intercolonial trade in the Caribbean than did the WIC. The Suriname Company attempted to close off the connection between Suriname and regional ports, but over time they had to cave in and issued regulations allowing limited intercolonial and interimperial trading.

### Intercolonial Beginnings

Connections across imperial borders in the Atlantic world were not only common; they were constitutive of Dutch efforts to settle on the “Wild Coast”. Not a single Dutch Guianese settlement would have grown and blossomed without creating ties to other non-Dutch colonies and relying on the resources available under the formal rule of other empires and states operating in the Americas. Healthy colonists were one such resource. The disease environment on the Wild Coast deteriorated with the arrival of forms of malaria in the seventeenth century. Colonists who had spent and survived a first year in the tropics were therefore a much sought after resource, and conflicts arose between the Dutch and the English over retaining colonists once the colony had changed hands. Much of the Dutch experience with sugar planting, enslavement and colonial trade had its origin in the short-lived experience in Dutch Brazil (1630–1654). The exodus of Jews and the Dutch during the Portuguese reconquest of Brazil resulted in a dissemination of experienced colonists throughout the Atlantic. By a myriad of routes some of these people ended up in Suriname and other Caribbean colonies.

The main push for plantation activities in Suriname was initiated by the English colonization from Barbados, which had been ordered by Lord Willoughby of Parham in 1651. Later, Suriname was taken from the English by the States of Zeeland under the leadership of Abraham Crijnsen in 1667. When in 1668 the English planters who had remained in Suriname requested from the Zeelanders the right to continue trading with Barbados, Crijnsen, as the acting Zeelandic governor, balanced between appeasing the English and limiting the trade. For Barbados the supplies of Surinamese wood were of great necessity because years of sugar cultivation had rid the land of wood. After a fire caused the “total ruin and destruction of the town in Barbados” the colonists requested to be allowed to ship “timber for the rebuilding of the city.”<sup>16</sup>

15 Ibid., 1056–1057.

16 Request by Major Bannister and the English inhabitants to Commander Crijnsen, July 1668, *Plakaatboek*, 13–15.

Crijnssen wanted to showcase the Dutch as good “allies and neighbors,” and allowed for the shipment of wood to take place in exchange for Barbadian sugar (most likely for re-export to the Dutch Republic), but only on Dutch vessels. About further trade he wrote that he “could not allow the trading from Barbados.”<sup>17</sup> On the other side Dutch vessels were blocked as well. Ships from Zeeland refused to take cargo to Barbados after two of them – with the consent of Crijnssen – went to Barbados and were confiscated there for breaking English navigation laws.<sup>18</sup>

Jewish merchants played a role in connecting Suriname to non-Dutch colonies. The migration of Jews to Suriname from Barbados – and after Zeeland’s take-over in the 1660s from Suriname back to Barbados and onwards to Jamaica – created ties between the two colonies that were outside of the control of the Zeelanders. While the Zeelanders were ill at ease with the existence of this trade route, they saw its potential use. In February 1670 Governor Lichtenberg wrote that Louis Dias from Barbados told Isack de Mesa (his brother-in-law) that “furnishing a ship to bring planters from Suriname to Barbados was only a pretext to get a ship to Suriname, to see if they could trade in wood between Suriname and Barbados.” The captain indeed found no one to leave the colony, and asked to export some wood, which Lichtenberg allowed him. This bold move by Dias worked, and Lichtenberg asked Isack de Mesa to write Dias:

...if those from Barbados bring sugar or other goods, and those of Barbados would allow the Dutch ships with cargo, there would be no objections from this side, and a regular trade could be established.<sup>19</sup>

The governor argued that this “would be a very good thing for Suriname.”<sup>20</sup> The Jews who previously resided on Barbados went on to tell Lichtenberg that he should “create a trade between New England and this colony, and bring horses,

17 “*conne ’t nogotieren van Barbados niet toestaan.*” Answer by Commander Crijnssen to the request by Major Bannister: Ibid., 15–17.

18 The case of the Captains Simon Aertsen and Jacob de Kleijne, 1668–1669. Zeeuws Archief (hereafter ZA), Staten van Zeeland, entry 2035, inv. no. 140–146. Transcribed in *Zeeuwse archivalia uit Suriname en omliggende kwartieren, 1667–1683* (Paramaribo: Surinaams Museum, 2003).

19 “*als die van de Barbados suiker of eenige soodanige waren hier brachten, en die van de Barbados wilden toelaten, dat de duijtse schepen ende met laddingh daer komen mochten, dat van dese kant geen swarigheijt soude gemaect worden om alsdan een vaste negotie te stabiliseren.*” Ibid.

20 “*een brave saeck voor Surinam soude sijn ende den tijt ons in korte, of het lucken sal, sal leeren.*” Ibid.



flour, and fish in exchange for *Kilduijvel* [rum] and syrup [molasses].” Lichtenberg was tempted by the idea and asked Henrico de Casseres to contact his correspondents in his name, to see if such could be organized because that “would be very important for the sugar mills in Suriname and greatly increase the exchange of goods between both places.”<sup>21</sup> After these initial steps the outbreak of hostilities with England in 1672 during the so-called Dutch “Year of Disaster” closed off the trade again. In that year several European states invaded the Dutch Republic and the trade between Suriname and Barbados – or any other English port for that matter – was hampered. The lack of intercolonial and interimperial contacts in the Zeelandic period of the colony might partly explain the lack of success the Zeelandic colonists had in developing Suriname. The hostilities in Europe not only impacted the intercolonial exchanges but also strained the transatlantic shipping connections.

The prolonged conflict of the Dutch with the combined forces of indigenous Caribs and Arawacs (and on occasion helped by escaped Africans) that broke out in the late 1670s strengthened the need of the colonists to reestablish a regional connection to acquire supplies to be able to combat the indigenous assailants.<sup>22</sup> The return of contact with Barbados was made in 1677 by Surinamese Governor Abel Thisso requesting supplies for the sustenance of his armed forces from his British counterpart on Barbados, Governor Jonathan Atkin.<sup>23</sup> After the initial reestablishment of contact Barbados “became Suriname’s most important colonial provider for provisions of all kind,” with private merchants joining in the trade.<sup>24</sup> As Claudia Schnurmann has shown, the Jewish settlers Louis Dias and Samuel Cohen Nassy (a Jewish entrepreneur in Suriname) played a prominent role in maintaining this connection, Nassy on the Surinamese side, Dias on the Barbadian side. They had organized intercolonial shipments in 1677 of limestone in exchange for wood.<sup>25</sup> When in

21 ZA, 8 Feb 1670, entry 2035 inv. no. 204–206. Ibid.

22 R. Buve, “Gouverneur Johannes Heinsius, de rol van Van Aerssens voorganger tijdens de Surinaams-Indische Oorlog, 1678–1680,” *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 45 (1966): 14–26.

23 Claudia Schnurmann, *Atlantische Welten: Engländer und Niederländer in amerikanisch-atlantischen Raum: 1648–1713* (Köln: Böhlau 1998), 22.

24 Claudia Schnurmann, “Atlantic Commerce and Nieuw Amsterdam/New York Merchants,” in *Jacob Leisler’s Atlantic World in the Later Seventeenth Century*, ed. Hermann Wellenreuther (Berlin: Lit Verlag 2009), 33–68, 46.

25 Schnurmann, “Atlantic Commerce” cites: National Archives of the Netherlands (hereafter NL-HaNA), 1.05.10.02 (Tweede West-Indische Compagnie [hereafter NWIC]) inv. no. 210; Amsterdam Municipal Archives (hereafter SAA) Notarial Archive (hereafter NA), 3250, Notary Hendrik Outgers fol. 40, 9 November 1680; NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, NWIC, inv. no. 344, 3 October 1679.

March 1678 the ship *Morgenstarre* with Captain Jan van der Spijck was sent to Barbados, David de Fonseca was on board as factor.<sup>26</sup> A year later Nassy and Governor Heinsius sent Jan van der Spijck out to Cayenne to bring in supplies.<sup>27</sup> Besides the Barbadian connection, Nassy also connected Suriname to Curaçao and New England, a connection already proposed to the Zeelanders by Surinamese Jews in the early days of their rule. While Curaçao remained of limited importance for Suriname, the connections to Barbados and New England continued. In 1680 Nassy's ship the *Trent* sailed the triangle New York – Suriname – Barbados. After the takeover of the colony by the Suriname Company, Nassy continued this trade and outfitted the *Betty* with Captain Marshall Cobie who sailed for Nassy from New York to Paramaribo and from there onward to Barbados in 1686.<sup>28</sup>

When the Zeelanders had taken Suriname in 1667 they had attempted to choke the regional connection with Barbados, which had existed since the founding of the colony by the English, but the connection never disappeared completely. A new possible break-up of the connection came with the transfer of the colony into the hands of the WIC in 1682 and the Suriname Company in 1683, but again the regional connection proved stronger than restrictive measures from the metropolis. On the precedent of his role in other intercolonial shipments, Nassy made a bold move: in February 1683 he requested to be allowed to bring horses from New England to Suriname and to continue the voyage onwards with that same ship to bring “sugar in exchange to Holland or Zeeland.” According to Nassy the ship would bring about 100 to 150 horses, which could only be transported “in English ships.” The sugar to be shipped to Holland or Zeeland was the payment for those horses. The Suriname Company agreed on the “condition that those loaded sugars will be brought directly to Holland or Zeeland.”<sup>29</sup> The intercolonial connections proved to be a very practical solution to the problems that colonists encountered when setting up a plantation colony in the tropics, but they also severely challenged the monopolistic vision of the directors in the Dutch Republic. In the first decade and a half after the Zeelandic takeover of the colony both

26 ZA, entry 2035 inv. no. 302–304. Letter to John Atkins on Barbados, March 1678.

27 Ibid., ZA, entry 2035 inv. no. 376. Declaration by Captain Jan van der Spijck, 22 December 1679.

28 Postma Suriname North America Data Collection (hereafter PSNADC), forthcoming as part of the Dutch Atlantic Connections database, <https://easy.dans.knaw.nl/ui/datasets/id/easy-dataset:33898>.

29 NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, Sociëteit van Suriname (hereafter SvS), inv. no. 212, “*Suickeren daar voor naer Holtt off Zeeld te voeren.*” Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren, 16 Nov 1683–Nov 1684.

Zeelandic and Jewish traders operated and set up the intercolonial and interimperial shipping connections, but already then, non-Dutch ships operated by North Americans started to take a significant share of the intercolonial trading.

### Formalizing Non-Dutch Access to Suriname

In the 1680s Nassy continued to challenge the directors of the Suriname Company and the local Surinamese authorities by arguing against the restrictions imposed on the colony by the XIIth article in the charter. Nassy managed to convince the local council to allow several individual shipments. When Governor Aerssen van Sommelsdijck assumed the post of governor, the English ships kept arriving, and Sommelsdijck commented that he did not “find it reasonable or fair or in the interest of the colony to send the ships back.” But van Sommelsdijck realized that the laws of the Company needed to be upheld, and an English ship that arrived from Barbados was told “not to come here anymore,” and to warn the others “that this trade and shipping is now forbidden and closed to them.”<sup>30</sup> After Sommelsdijck assured the directors of the Suriname Company that he was doing his part in closing off the English trade, he went on to stress how important it would be to import horses, because “more than ten mills are standing still because of the lack of horses or other animals.” According to the governor this was all to the “noticeable detriment of both the private parties and the Company as well as the return ships.” The freighters were indeed sailing back with less sugar than they could load.

After the mutiny of 1688 in which Governor Van Sommelsdijck was killed, the governing Council spoke out strongly in favor of regional supplies. The mutiny mainly took place due to the lack of rations handed out to the soldiers. One of the officers wrote to the Directors of the Suriname Company in Amsterdam that the troops would have rebelled again if goods were not imported from the New England colonies to Suriname.<sup>31</sup> When Nassy made another request to the Council in August 1689, they granted him the right to bring goods from English ships to shore. This, according to the Council, should prevent them sailing away to other destinations. It was of great importance

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30 NL-HaNA, SvS, 1.05.03 inv. no. 212, “*niet hebbende redelijk, billijk, noch met de interesse van de colonie geoordeelt over een te komen het selvige terugge te senden*”... “*hier niet meer te coomen*”... “*dat haer dese negotie ende vaert verboden ende gesloten was.*”

31 Postma, “Breaching the Mercantile,” 114.

because they thought that the future of the colony depended on the goods brought from New England.<sup>32</sup>

The non-Dutch trade in the period was comparable to ordinary coastal trade in content: mostly provisions, foodstuffs, building material and no luxuries. It connected North America and Barbados with Suriname and formed a web of connections between different regions on the Atlantic's Western Coast. Many skippers sailing to Paramaribo came there more than once, and often from the ports of Boston and New York. Especially on the import side the English North American colonies were important. They supplied the goods as requested by Nassy: provisions and horses.<sup>33</sup> Because Suriname had not yet become a full-fledged sugar plantation colony but was also engaged in trade with the Amerindians and logging, the ships that arrived from North America with provisions had hardly anything they could legally load to bring back there, since plantation products could only be shipped to the Dutch Republic. In 1678 no molasses of Dutch origins entered the Boston harbor.<sup>34</sup> However, the lack of wood on Barbados and the abundance of it upstream the Suriname River made triangular voyages between New England – Suriname – Barbados viable. The destination for the non-Dutch ships was Barbados. Returning to New England was another option, but not a route that was often taken. For example, ships did arrive from Rhode Island, but none of the ships that left Paramaribo in the early period declared it as their destination.<sup>35</sup>

Sometimes the directors of the Suriname Company would allow sales to be made. While generally lenient when it came to horses, they would be stricter in cases that involved sugar. When an Englishman arrived in the colony of Suriname in 1701 to ship sugar he was refused his shipment. According to the governor he was using an old permit that was not even in his name. The captain was looking to transport sugar, a "high good" (a valuable commodity intended for the European market) according to the governor and forbade the captain to load the hold.<sup>36</sup> Many months later, the Board of the Suriname Company confirmed this policy of the governor. The decision was primarily based on the goods that the Englishman was trying to trade. In 1701 the

32 NL-HaNA, SvS, 1.05.03, Minuut-notulen van de ordinaris en extra-ordinaris vergaderingen van het Hof van Politie en Criminele Justitie, 12 March 1689–1710 January 1692; meeting of 4 August 1689.

33 Ibid.

34 Gilman M. Ostrander, "The Colonial Molasses Trade," *Agricultural History* 30 (1956): 77–84.

35 PSNADC.

36 NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, SvS, inv. no. 229, Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren, Report of ships in Paramaribo, 5 December 1701.

Company Directors connived to bring horses on shore by turning a blind eye. If anything else was unloaded, however, all goods and the ship that brought them had to be confiscated.<sup>37</sup>

The regional connection was efficient in supplying food and provisions. Captains had the option to sell their goods elsewhere and move onward to other ports in case there were problems on the Paramaribo market. The ships were also notably smaller than the large ocean going vessels of the Dutch. This resulted in a very quick turnover of English ships in Suriname. The War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1713) had no negative influence on the regional shipping, which increased tremendously over the war years. Despite the increase in ships (and therefore the availability of tonnage) the ships still retained waiting times of less than two months in port. The comparative advantage of regional shipping over transatlantic shipping hardly needs explaining. While vessels were indeed much smaller in the regional trade, their average waiting time in the colony also suggests that they were able to deal with local market conditions efficiently. By the end of the war their total number well exceeded that of Dutch ships.<sup>38</sup>

The increase of non-Dutch regional shipping triggered a response from the directors of the Suriname Company. From their perspective it was undercutting their business, but they understood that the connection was fundamental to the survival of their colony. The directors of the Suriname Company also felt responsible for supporting the Amsterdam merchants connected to Suriname, rather than only the Company's own tax revenue. While the Dutch lacked any formal West India interest, the Suriname Company not only functioned as a company to manage the colony, but also as a special interest group for entrepreneurs with private interests in the colony. The issue of the regional trade, as discussed in den Heijer's contribution to this volume, had immediately come up during the drafting of the colony's charter in the 1680s. From time to time requests regarding the freeing up of the regional trade were sent to the directors, and the governor pleaded to allow English ships to sell their goods. The Suriname Company continued to discuss the issue of regional trade in their meetings. In 1702 they wrote an ordinance based on the advice of the commission they had instated. The plan was to only allow horse sales, and confiscate the entire ship and its cargo of anyone who tried to trade other goods. Such a strict order would likely have killed off the trade entirely if it had been implemented. Governor Van Der Veen wrote that he was disappointed by the fact

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37 NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, SvS, inv. no. 2, Minutes board meeting of the Suriname Company, 19 August 1701.

38 PSNADC.

that the Suriname Company had only allowed him to import horses, and had disallowed the buying of general provisions, which was “one of the two legs that the colony has to walk on.” He also made clear to the Board members that it was causing many political conflicts between him and the local governing council.<sup>39</sup>

To resolve the issue the board in Amsterdam and their governor in Suriname had to consult with the local governing Council who would be instrumental in enforcing the law. They discussed an early draft of the order that came down to levying a tax on imported English horses, and to confiscate all other goods the North Americans brought to the colony. Especially the confiscation was deemed unreasonable by the councilors and they protested loudly. The Council argued that the board “did not have to worry” about the competition from New England.<sup>40</sup> The horses, their hay and water were said to take so much space on board the “small and hellish” ships that there was no space to carry any other merchandise.<sup>41</sup> It is very likely that the Suriname Company directors knew that those arguments did not make much sense. However, they must have realized that if the colonists would not cooperate they could just let the ships enter Suriname illicitly and the Company would be powerless to police it efficiently.

The issue of liberalizing regional trade continued to be investigated by special commissions and remained a point of discussion in the boardroom of the Suriname Company. When planters asked in 1700 that they be allowed to organize coastal trade along the Coast of Spanish America the idea was completely buried.<sup>42</sup> In 1703 the Suriname Company finally ordained that there could be imports from North America, provided that they kept to strict regulations.<sup>43</sup> The reluctant directors of the Suriname Company were realistic enough to allow for this indispensable interimperial trade.<sup>44</sup> This compromise between the colonists

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39 NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, SvS, inv. no. 229, Response to the order of the Suriname Company to ban English imports, 28 January 1702.

40 Many years later Governor Nepveu argued the opposite, namely that the flour from the Netherlands arrived in a bad state due to the Atlantic crossing, which is why he preferred the North American imports. NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, SvS, inv. no. 353, folio 236, Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren uit Suriname, 1774.

41 NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, SvS, inv. no. 229, Response to the order of the Suriname Company to ban English imports, 19 July 1702.

42 NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, SvS, inv. no. 21, Minutes board meeting of the Suriname Company, 25 September 1700.

43 NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, SvS, inv. no. 22, Minutes board meeting of the Suriname Company, January 1703.

44 At the same time a similar issue arose in Essequibo, a colony directly under the Zeeland Chamber of the WIC. The Chamber strictly ordered that there be no trade with New York

and the Suriname Company that came out of this remained in place for about 80 years until the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War stopped most Dutch shipping and the Surinamese were allowed to fit out vessels themselves. In the case of Suriname the size of the plantation-production, the history of the regional connections, and maybe also the inclination of directors from Amsterdam towards unhampered trade broke the initial mercantilism of the charter of 1682.

In the final published version of the law on English shipping to Suriname in 1704, the concern with maintaining control over who shipped what is clearly shown in the level of detail with which the directors described what could and could not be shipped. It stated that the inhabitants of Suriname were allowed to trade with skippers from New England, New Netherland (sic) as well as neighboring islands. The final order read that "The alien ships shall not be allowed to bring European manufactures of gold, silver, copper, steel, wool, silk or linen, nor wheat, rye, barley and oats nor meat, or East Indian goods or spices" or "slaves." Ships sailing from the colony for North America could not carry any sugar, but they were allowed to have "molasses, dram [rum], timber and any and all wares shipped to Suriname from the Republic." With this regulation the directors sought to prevent European and East Indian wares from being shipped to the colony via non-Dutch intermediaries and to bar them from taking on direct shipping between Europe and Suriname. As further discouragement, the Company levied a 5 percent tariff on both foreign imports and exports – double the amount of the duty on goods shipped to the Republic. For cattle, horses and sheep an extra fee was compulsory.<sup>45</sup> The bylaw was translated and published in the *Boston Newsletter* the following year.<sup>46</sup>

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and Barbados, except in case of great need. They added that this pretext was being used far too lightly. NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, NWIC, inv. no. 812, *Letter from the WIC chamber Zeeland to Commander Beekman of Essequibo*, Middelburg 12 March 1704.

45 Bylaw 221, 25 April 1704, *Plakaatboek*, 253–255.

46 "That from henceforth in the colony of Suranam, foreign vessels shall be suffered and admitted with horses from New England...and that the masters of such vessels for themselves and their ships and lading have liberty to trade with the inhabitants as they shall think meet observing and regulating themselves according to the laws and statutes of the country and usage of the place, namely that said foreign ships may not bring in or import any European manufacturies of gold, silver, copper, steel, woolens, silk or linens nor any [European] wheat, rye, barley, oats or beef. And, lastly that the aforesaid ship shall not land on board for transportation any sugar and the aforesaid vessel many only take or carry from hence molasses, Suranam brandy, saw'd wood, as beams, planks and heading and all other wares and merchandize brought from the United Netherlands to Suranam." *Boston Newsletter*, 4 September 1705, cited in Joseph Avitable, *The Atlantic World Economy and Colonial Connecticut* (unpublished PhD diss., University of Rochester, 2009), 159.

Even though the issue seemed to be resolved, there still was the request to allow Surinamese ships to trade regionally. Around 1716 a pamphlet was published in the Dutch Republic by a “group of interested parties,” led by former principal accountant of the colony Jan van der Marsche. The petitioners were concerned about the supply of slaves, military defense, and free trade from the colony. In their pamphlet they complained that all the other Caribbean colonies (they used Barbados as example) prospered thanks to the freedom granted to them by their motherland. They claimed that the Surinamese planters and traders had to watch how their *syroop* (molasses) was rotting away because they were restricted in their trade within the Caribbean and with North America.<sup>47</sup> They demanded further freedoms for the regional trade; the central issue being that the planters wanted to be able to trade locally themselves instead of having to wait for the English to come and pick up the molasses. It was argued that regional trade by the Dutch would also increase the number of local ships and able-bodied seamen in port to strengthen the colony’s defenses in case of an attack. They proposed to start a symbiotic relation with Curaçao to get “Salt, flint, and limestone.” In case the English supply of horses would be stopped, the colonists would be able to get their horses from Portuguese Brazil, Essequibo, or from the Orinoco. The *lastgeld* (tax on shipping tonnage) and import tax would still come to the Suriname Company, and the growth of the colony would increase shipping, production and consumption in the colony for the benefit of the Republic.<sup>48</sup> Their suggestions had much in common with the position taken by the North American colonists who were demanding freedom in trade between their colonies and the other colonies in the Americas. These protests turned out to be in vain. The regulation that had been issued in 1703 and adopted in Suriname in 1704 remained the official compromise between the interests of the colonists and the power of the Company.

### Credit and Shipping

While the directors of the Suriname Company failed to prevent non-Dutch shipping to and from Suriname, the changes in the credit system did for a time successfully promote Dutch shipping at the expense of the New Englanders. At the beginning of the eighteenth century Suriname was no longer a precarious

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47 NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, SvS, inv. no. 125, *Request of J. van der Marsche and other interested parties to regulate the supply of slaves to, the defence of, and the free trade on the colony of Suriname*, 1 April 1716.

48 Ibid.



colony in a tropical borderland, but it had consolidated both inland as well as in terms of its shipping connections. The non-Dutch trade, the bilateral freighting between the Republic and Suriname as well as the slave trade became more dependable in the decades following the War of the Spanish Succession. In this period the Surinamese plantation economy also began to grow quickly.<sup>49</sup> This growth depended on the forced labor of enslaved Africans who were shipped across the Atlantic by Dutch slave traders. The buying of an enslaved laborer was a transaction involving a complicated transatlantic credit system. When the slave trade was still the monopoly of the WIC the system was still relatively clear: when buying a slave a plantation manager would either pay in kind, or enter into debt with the company. The WIC had an arrangement whereby the plantation owners could pay for the enslaved in three installments. The WIC therefore carried much of the debt of the Surinamese plantation owners.<sup>50</sup> The WIC carried this debt as part of the expenses to support the Dutch activities in the Atlantic, and the WIC's obligation to deliver "sufficient" numbers of enslaved laborers to Suriname.

When the slave trade was liberalized and free market slave traders began to supply Suriname with captive workers this system changed. The demand for privately financed credit increased as private slave traders were more anxious about getting paid for their expensive slaving voyages than the WIC had been. After roughly ten years of free slave trading during the 1740s, the debts of the plantation owners had risen so excessively that the system was in danger of grinding to a halt.<sup>51</sup> To revive the slave trade and the plantation economy an Amsterdam banker devised a credit scheme whereby investment funds, called *negotiatie*, would bundle capital from multiple investors and extend loans to various plantations. Without going into the obvious problems with such a system and the inevitable bubble and subsequent collapse that followed, it suffices to sketch the timeline of that development. In 1753 the first *negotiatie* was founded which bought up debt from planters with capital invested primarily by the Amsterdam banker Gideon Deutz. In 1765 the investments increased rapidly, until in 1769 there was far more credit than there were possibilities to invest, resulting in overinvestment into unprofitable plantations. In 1773 the bubble burst and investors came to reconsider the inflated expectations of plantation-based profits. Despite the ensuing caution by investors, investment

49 Alex van Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast: roofbouw en overleven in een Caraïbische plantagekolonie, 1750–1863* (Leiden: KITLV, 1993), 429–432.

50 Jan Jacob Hartsinck, *Beschryving van Guiana, of de Wildekust in Zuid-America*, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: Gerrit Tielenburg, 1770), 628; Johannes Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 179–180.

51 Voort, *De Westindische plantages*, 83–89.

continued well into the 1770s, but stopped in 1780s.<sup>52</sup> Over the period roughly 36 million Dutch guilders had been invested in Suriname.<sup>53</sup>

Despite the bad reputation of the credit system as being the cause for the decline in plantation profits, it did result in a massive expansion of the plantation system and it influenced the business model by which plantations were run. When we follow the trends in shipping in Figure 2.1 the result of the *negotiatie* on Dutch and non-Dutch shipping is clear. For the first time since the 1690s, the late 1750s until the end of the 1760s is the first period in which the number of Dutch ships in Paramaribo is greater than non-Dutch ships. This continues in the second half of the 1770s until the outbreak of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War. The reason for the relative increase in Dutch shipping compared to non-Dutch shipping is the *negotiatie* investment system. The funds had a major influence on the supply-lines the plantation managers could use to acquire provisions. The investment fund director extended credit on the basis of the tropical products that the plantation managers would send across the Atlantic to the Dutch Republic. But in the organization of the funds these directors also demanded to supply the provisions to the plantations (taking a handsome commission). To ensure that the plantation managers followed the instructions of the investment funds so-called *agendarissen* were placed in Paramaribo, controlling the individual plantations within their fund, greatly diminishing the autonomy of plantation managers to organize their business. While the molasses trade certainly continued during this period, it is evident from the shipping figures that Dutch shipping to and from the colony increased.

The relatively high level of Dutch compared to non-Dutch shipping came to a definite end around the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War. By then the *negotiaties* no longer expanded at any great rate, many plantations had gone bankrupt, and their management centralized into the hands of several large funds. The outbreak of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War not only coincided with the fizzling out of new investments by the *negotiaties*, it also impeded the Dutch control of the seas as discussed by Oostindie elsewhere in this volume. At the same time the star of the newly independent United States was rising and the Americans were quickly expanding their navy and merchant fleet, both in the Atlantic as well as the Mediterranean, Pacific and Indian Ocean. While Dutch shipping and export did revive after the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, the New England ports had taken the position as freighters in the Atlantic world. They no longer just serviced the connection between North America and Suriname, they had

52 Alex van Stipriaan, "Debunking Debts, Image and Reality of a Colonial Crisis: Suriname at the End of the 18th Century," *Itinerario* 19, no. 1 (1995): 69–84.

53 Voort, *De Westindische Plantages*, 265.

also started to ship sugar between Suriname and Amsterdam, and in the 1790s became the colony's most important supplier of enslaved Africans.<sup>54</sup>

### Conclusion

Non-Dutch shipping was a constant and elastic factor in the colonization of Suriname. The small vessels of the North Americans quickly adapted to the changes in the market conditions. While the Dutch had been renowned for operating in intercolonial and interimperial circuits in much of the seventeenth century, non-Dutch shipping clearly became instrumental to the colonization of Suriname in the late seventeenth century. It increased in importance after the founding of the Suriname Company in 1683 and defied the mercantilist restrictions that this company imposed. It remained an important factor throughout the expansion of Suriname's plantation system. During the period of the *negotiatie* funds from the mid-1750s to late 1770s Dutch shipping was boosted, but non-Dutch shipping quickly increased to meet the demands of the colony once Dutch shipping collapsed in the wake of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War.

The issue of regional exchange came up almost immediately after the Zeelanders had taken over the colony in 1667. The response of Abraham Crijnssen, who had captured the colony for the Dutch, was to block non-Dutch shipping to and from Suriname. However, lack of food and supplies made successive governors more benevolent when it came to non-Dutch shipping with English colonies. The Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672–1674) cut the connections short, but these were resumed quickly after hostilities ceased and the Surinamese colonists were in great need of provisions. In the following decades the network of regional trade went through a major transformation. The contact between Suriname and its former colonizer Barbados (with which it had maintained a symbiotic relationship for many decades) was fading away and was being replaced by trade more fitting to the changing nature of the colony. Surinamese plantations were producing molasses as a byproduct, and were limiting wood production. The initial mutual exchange between the two colonies came under pressure now that there was a competition between the two, both with regard to the sales of molasses, as well as the buying up of North American provisions. With the end of Zeelandic rule in 1682, the Suriname Company again tried to ban the non-Dutch trade to and from Suriname with a very restrictive article in its charter. The Suriname Company, however, failed to do so and a more lenient bylaw was passed in 1704.

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54 Postma, "Suriname and Its Atlantic Connections," 287–322.

While the charter had been insufficient to restrict non-Dutch trading, a change in the credit system did impact the shipping patterns between Suriname and the Atlantic world. The only time when Dutch shipping began to regain terrain from the non-Dutch New Englanders was at a time when gross overinvestment from the Dutch Republic flooded Suriname and created restrictions on who could supply the plantation with provisions. The managers of the investment funds extended credit on the precondition that they would not only receive a plantation's products, but also exclusive rights to sell the plantation the provisions it needed. In the end the credit system collapsed during the 1770s. When at the beginning of the 1780s Dutch shipping entered troubled waters during the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, New Englanders quickly took much of the shipping to and from the colony.

The production of sugar, coffee, cacao and other tropical products on Surinamese plantations for the European market relied on land, labor, capital and military protection. Capital came in the form of Dutch investment, labor through the enslavement of Africans and land primarily through the conquest and subsequent defense of Suriname by Dutch armed forces. However this chapter has shown that regional, intercolonial and often interimperial supply lines were fundamental to sustain colonization efforts in Suriname. Despite their reputation, the Dutch conceded their position as successful middlemen in the later decades of the seventeenth century to captains and merchants based in non-Dutch colonies. During the eighteenth century the New Englanders were able to provide provisions at competitive prices to the plantation managers in Suriname, while the Dutch focused on the transatlantic shipping of tropical products. Dutch shipping did increase its relative importance to the colony in the 1760s and 1770s, but only based on a phenomenal investment of Dutch capital. Once Dutch power at sea was severely challenged by the British, New England captains decidedly took over Suriname's shipping connections in the 1790s.

# Anglo-Dutch Trade in the Chesapeake and the British Caribbean, 1621–1733

Christian J. Koot

## Introduction

In recent years scholars have produced a flurry of work describing the Dutch influence on Britain and its empire during the early modern period. The celebration of the 400th anniversary of the arrival of Henry Hudson in what would become New York City and the publication of several new works has reinvigorated the study of Anglo-Dutch relations and cultural borrowing. This scholarship has charted Dutch influence on a number of English developments during the seventeenth century, including those in the fields of cartography, finance, national accounting, and even landscape design. Other works have concentrated on the strong cultural, political, diplomatic, and religious links that the Dutch and English shared and the ways that migration and commerce buttressed these bonds. In the aggregate these works have offered a thoroughly international history of the origins of the British state.<sup>1</sup>

As scholars of early modern Britain have revised our understanding of state-building there, historians of the early modern Atlantic world have also been at work reconsidering the nature of Atlantic empires. Moving away from an earlier view that focused on the institutional character of early modern empires, Atlantic historians are increasingly finding that imperial economies grew out

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1 For examples of scholarship considering Anglo-Dutch relations in the seventeenth century see Lisa Jardine, *Going Dutch: How England Plundered Holland's Glory* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008); Steven Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009); Jonathan Scott, "'Good Night Amsterdam': Sir George Downing and Anglo-Dutch Statebuilding," *English Historical Review* 113, no. 47 (2003): 334–356; Thomas Claydon, *Europe and the Making of England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560–1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Jacob Soll, "Accounting for Government: Holland and the Rise of Political Economy in Seventeenth-Century Europe," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40, no. 2 (2009): 215–238. This scholarship, of course, has a long history and is best investigated through the volumes produced by the Anglo-Dutch Historical Conference intermittently since 1959. There were also a number of studies published surrounding the 300th anniversary of the Glorious Revolution. See, for example Jonathan I. Israel, ed., *The Anglo-Dutch Moment: Essays on the Glorious Revolution and its world impact* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

of local decision-making and self-organized, often interimperial, networks as much as they did from centralized planning and metropolitan coordination.<sup>2</sup> Scholars have uncovered particularly close ties between the commercially powerful Dutch Republic and England's fledgling colonies. Encouraged by the vulnerabilities of colonial life and less affected by the cross-sea rivalry that sometimes tempered Anglo-Dutch relations in Europe, English and Dutch colonists forged close cross-national relationships in the Americas that endured for more than a century.<sup>3</sup>

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- 2 For examples of the most recent statements of this argument see Games, *The Web of Empire*; David Hancock, *Oceans of wine: Madeira and the emergence of American trade and taste* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2009); Michael J. Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the maritime Atlantic world, 1680–1783* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2010).
  - 3 Most work on Anglo-Dutch trade in the Americas has focused on Anglo-Dutch interaction in the Chesapeake and New Netherland/New York. April Lee Hatfield, "Dutch New Netherland Merchants in the Seventeenth-Century English Chesapeake," in *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel*, ed. Peter Coclanis (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 205–228; Hatfield, "Mariners, Merchants, and Colonists in Seventeenth-Century English America," in *The Creation of the British Atlantic World*, ed. Elizabeth Mancke and Carole Shammas (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 139–159; Claudia Schnurman, *Atlantische Welten. Engländer und Niederländer im amerikanisch-atlantischen Raum, 1648–1713*, Wirtschafts- und Sozialhistorische Studien, no. 9 (Cologne, 1998); Schnurmann, "Atlantic Trade and American Identities: The Correlations of Supranational Commerce, Political Opposition, and Colonial Regionalism," in *The Atlantic Economy*, ed. Coclanis, 186–204; Schnurmann, "Representative Atlantic Entrepreneur: Jacob Leisler, 1640–1691," in *Riches From Atlantic Commerce Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585–1817*, ed. Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 259–283; Jan Kupp, "Dutch Notarial Acts Relating to the Tobacco Trade of Virginia, 1608–1653," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 30 (1973): 653–655; Victor Enthoven and Wim Klooster, "The Rise and Fall of the Virginia-Dutch Connection in the Seventeenth Century," in *Early Modern Virginia: Reconsidering the Old Dominion*, ed. Douglas Bradburn and John C. Coombs (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 90–127. For works that also consider New England see Cynthia J. van Zandt, "The Dutch Connection: Isaac Allerton and the Dynamics of English Cultural Anxiety in the *Gouden Eeuw*," in *Connecting Cultures: The Netherlands in Five Centuries of Transatlantic Exchange*, ed. Rosemarijn Hoefte and Johnanna C. Kardux (Amsterdam: Vrije University Press, 1994), 51–76; Kim Todt, "Trading between New Netherland and New England, 1624–1664," in "The Worlds of Lion Gardiner, ca. 1599–1663: Crossing and Boundaries," ed. Ned Landsman and Andrew Newman, special issue, *Early American Studies* 9, no. 2 (2011): 348–378. Anglo-Dutch trade in the English Caribbean has received surprisingly little in-depth attention. See the works cited below and the several examples noted by Wim Klooster, "Inter-Imperial Smuggling in the

Intended to evaluate and characterize the nature and meaning of the American dimensions of Anglo-Dutch trade during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, this essay will examine the extent and scope of Anglo-Dutch colonial exchange, the ways Dutch and British merchants transacted business, the networks they constructed, and the colonial nodal points where trade was based. In assessing the importance of Anglo-Dutch trade for the British empire, it will also consider the ways that British colonists understood the meaning of these exchanges and in turn the character of their empire. Largely focused on the places where Anglo-Dutch trade was most significant – the Chesapeake and the British Caribbean – I argue that Dutch trade was important to the development of British colonies and thus the British Atlantic. More than providing needed trade, colonists' experience with Dutch commerce also spurred them to advocate for the flexibility to determine their own commercial futures even if this approach clashed with England's increasingly mercantilist empire. British colonists, in other words, always understood their Anglo-Dutch trade as political as well as economic. Dutch trade matters in our understanding of the evolution of the British Atlantic both because it aided economic development at the fringes of the empire and because it shaped the political economy of that empire.

### **The General Structure of Anglo-Dutch Trade in British America**

Though Anglo-Dutch trade was a feature of nearly every British colonial economy during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, its intensity and the mechanisms merchants of both empires used to conduct trade varied over time and by location. Trade was most vigorous in the important agricultural staple producing regions, namely the Chesapeake and Caribbean, and was most common when English merchants could not meet colonists' needs for imports and shipping services, as was true before 1650 and during periods of imperial warfare thereafter. The chief determinant of the methods colonists

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Americas, 1600–1800,” in *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500–1830*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 141–180, 157–162; Paul E. Kopperman, “Ambivalent Allies: Anglo-Dutch Relations and the Struggle against the Spanish Empire in the Caribbean, 1621–1644,” *The Journal of Caribbean History* 21, no. 1 (1987): 55–77. I have worked in this area as well and this essay follows the arguments I made in Koot, *Empire at the Periphery: British Colonists, Anglo-Dutch Trade, and the Development of the British Atlantic, 1621–1713* (New York: NYU Press, 2011).

used to trade was the relative intensity of commerce and the legal situation in which both groups operated. When demand for Anglo-Dutch exchange was highest, such as during the Caribbean and Chesapeake export booms of the 1640s and 1650s, Dutch and English actors alike built durable networks backed by credit relationships and facilitated by the presence of Dutch agents in English colonies to manage trade. As trade slowed or as English mercantile laws erected barriers to direct trade, both groups adapted, returning to less structured exchange relationships and moving their direct interactions to more receptive colonies, such as Dutch St. Eustatius or Danish St. Thomas.

While the frequency of Anglo-Dutch trade and the means of executing it varied according to economic and regulatory changes, what remained largely consistent over the course of the first century of settlement in the English Atlantic was the general pattern of trade. In most cases Dutch merchants provided English settlers with a range of products that supported their settlements and plantations. These included European manufactured goods, especially ceramics, textiles, and metal wares; provisions, including beer, wine, flour, cheese, and, for those not in the Caribbean, sugar and its byproducts; and livestock, mainly horses but also cattle and goats. Less common, but at times more valuable, Dutch traders also brought British colonists exotic goods such as spices and silks from the East Indies. In return for these items, Dutch merchantmen usually returned to the Dutch Republic from English colonies bearing tropical commodities, mainly sugar and tobacco. Even when demand for European goods was low, English planters still welcomed Dutch traders because of the relatively inexpensive shipping services they offered. Finally, Dutch merchants also sold enslaved Africans in British colonies, though the trade was numerically insignificant when compared to English slavers.<sup>4</sup>

### Establishing Trade, 1620s–1630s

The first Anglo-Dutch commercial interactions in the Americas were an outgrowth of the nations' close relationship within Europe and Elizabeth I's commitment to provide troops to help the Dutch in their struggle against Spain after 1585. When the Virginia Company (1606) sought new leaders to bring order to their fledgling settlement at Jamestown in 1611 they turned to two English men with extensive military experience in the Netherlands, Sir Thomas Gates and Sir Thomas Dale. Though it is uncertain what specific commercial

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4 For more on the Anglo-Dutch slave trade see note 48 below and Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*, 56–57, 127–129, 196–199.



connections these men encouraged between the new English colony and the Dutch Republic, it is clear that the States General was willing to release them to the Virginia Company because they believed the men would help the Republic “to establish a firm market there [Virginia] for the benefit and increase of trade.”<sup>5</sup>

As Virginians began to produce successful tobacco harvests in the 1620s, Dutch merchants capitalized on earlier inroads and quickly captured a portion of the colony’s exports. Although there is little detailed evidence of Anglo-Dutch exchange in these years it is clear that Dutch vessels were common in Virginia. After receiving a charter in 1621, the Dutch West India Company moved to gain monopoly control of the Virginia trade, banning private trade to the region and dispatching a vessel there. Meanwhile, English traders also learned to take advantage of Dutch markets for tobacco. Already by 1622, for example, the Virginia Company had begun to send tobacco to Flushing and Middelburg to circumvent James I’s efforts to limit England’s tobacco imports. By the end of the decade, however, the English Crown’s reluctance to embrace tobacco dissipated as officials became aware that Dutch traders’ domination of the Chesapeake’s tobacco exports prevented English merchants from engaging in this valuable trade.<sup>6</sup> Selling tobacco to the Dutch was so appealing to English colonists in the Chesapeake because Dutch merchants both brought scarce European goods and offered better prices for their tobacco than planters could secure in England. Governor John Harvey of Virginia reported in 1632, for example, that Dutch masters offered as much as “eighteen peance p. pound” for tobacco, a price he claimed was greater than that which English traders offered. Meanwhile, Dutch vessels, well stocked with “sugar, strong waters,

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5 “Petition of Sir Thomas Dale to the Noble, High and Mighty Lords, the Lords the States General of the United Netherlands,” January 1618, in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, ed. E.B. O’Callaghan, et al. (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons, and Co., 1856) 1: 18 (hereafter *DRCHNY*); Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *The Jamestown Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 273–274; Enthoven and Klooster, “The Rise and Fall of the Virginia-Dutch Connection in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Early Modern Virginia*, ed. Bradburn and Coomes, 93–94; Charlotte Wilcoxen, *Dutch Trade and Ceramics in America in the Seventeenth Century* (Albany, NY: Albany Institute of History & Art, 1987), 19–21. Testifying to the commercial intelligence the Dutch quickly gathered about Virginia is Johannes Vingboon’s strikingly detailed 1617 chart of the James River. Michael Jarvis and Jeroen van Driel, “The Vingboon’s Chart of the James River, circa 1617,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser. 54 (1997): 377–394, 381–383, 385–387.

6 Enthoven and Klooster, “The Rise and Fall of the Virginia-Dutch Connection,” in *Early Modern Virginia*, ed. Bradburn and Coomes, 95–97; Wilcoxen, *Dutch Trade and Ceramics*, 20–21.

lemons, hats, shirts, stockings, frying-pans, &c" brought the kinds of necessities for which Chesapeake planters were always desperate.<sup>7</sup>

In the Caribbean, where the English established settlements in St. Christopher, Nevis, Antigua, Montserrat, and Barbados during the 1620s and 1630s, Anglo-Dutch trade was also an important feature of colonial life. Having already cooperated in privateering raids against the Spanish since the 1580s, it was not unusual for Dutch and English colonists to collaborate in the Caribbean. On English islands like St. Christopher these interactions usually entailed Dutch vessels calling to obtain water, provisions, and intelligence. For poorly supported colonists struggling to build viable settlements the arrival of Dutch vessels provided essential trade and information.<sup>8</sup> Regular small-scale exchange between Dutch and English settlers in the 1620s blossomed into more sustained trade in the mid-1630s as planters began to introduce tobacco.<sup>9</sup>

Familiar with these islands and with Dutch colonies nearby, Dutch shipmasters almost immediately arrived to purchase tobacco. An outgrowth of their trade with Virginia, Dutch captains added the English Caribbean to what scholars refer to as the Dutch Atlantic cruising trade. Under this arrangement, one or more merchants hired a vessel in the Netherlands, loaded it with a cargo of provisions, wine and beer, textiles, glazed earthenware, and other manufactured goods, and engaged a captain and crew to transport the cargo to the Americas where the captain was instructed to exchange it for tobacco or other colonial produce. Because they had not arranged trade beforehand and usually did not have established contacts in the Caribbean, the organizers gave their shipmasters

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7 Wilcoxon, *Dutch Trade and Ceramics*, 20; "Richard Ingle in Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 1, no. 2 (1906): 131–132.

8 Henry Colt, "The Voyage of Sir Henry Colt Knight to ye Ilands of ye Antilleas," circa 1631, in *Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana, 1623–1667*, ed. Vincent T. Harlow, ser. 2, vol. 56 (London: Hakluyt Society Publications, 1924), 94; Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*, 34–35.

9 Depositions of William Roper, Thomas Horne, and James Barrey: N. Darnell Davis, ed., "Papers Relating to the Early History of Barbados and St. Kitts," *Timehri* 6 (1892): 327–349, 333–337; Harlow, "Introduction," xv–xxviii and "Relation of the First Settlement of St. Christophers and Nevis, by John Hilton, Storekeeper and Chief Gunner of Nevis," 1675, both in *Colonising Expeditions*, ed. Harlow, 4–17; Carl and Roberta Bridenbaugh, *No Peace Beyond the Line: The English in the Caribbean, 1624–1690* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 29–34; Richard Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624–1713* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 118–120; C.S.S. Higham, *The Development of the Leeward Islands under the Restoration, 1660–1688* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921), 1–27.

wide leeway in determining where they would trade. In 1635, for example, Guiliemeli van der Grindt instructed shipmaster Adriaek Turck to take the *St. Catarina van Grint*, from Amsterdam to Barbados and the other Caribbean islands. Turck ultimately visited both St. Christopher and Barbados and exchanged his cargo of salt, wine, bread, peas, and manufactured goods for tobacco. Other times, these Dutch vessels also included stops in Virginia or even New England, such as the 160-ton Dutch vessel that called at Marblehead in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1635 carrying “one hundred and forty tons of salt, and ten thousand weight of tobacco” from St. Christopher. Already having loaded salt and tobacco in the West Indies, this vessel was most likely completing its voyage by selling salt to Massachusetts’ cod fisherman before returning to Europe. Though less common, Dutch masters sometimes even sold on credit; in 1635, for example, the Dutch traders Gilles Vertangen, Gilles de Croede, and David Aijbrantsz traveled to Barbados and St. Christopher to collect more than 13,000 pounds of tobacco due to them as payment for an earlier delivery.<sup>10</sup> Extending credit to planters on distant islands without a representative in place to manage their debts was a risky proposition and indicates the lengths some Dutch merchants were willing to take to gain access to English tobacco. At the same time, the fact that some traders were willing to offer credit suggests that they traded to English islands regularly enough to be confident that they could collect the debts. Although masters had to call at a number of ports to fill their vessels and the value of individual exchanges was often small, the cruising trade flourished during the 1630s. As English colonists learned about the benefits of Dutch trade they too began to more actively seek Dutch commerce.<sup>11</sup>

10 21 November 1635, Amsterdam Municipal Archives Notarieel Archief, (hereafter SAA:NA) 671/355, not. J. Warnaez; 18 December 1635, SAA:NA 701/908, 672/56v, 695/256v, not. Jan Warnaez. See also 21 November 1634, SAA:NA 1225/fol. 49v, not. Isaacz Henricxsen v. Gierteren; 12 December 1635, SAA:NA 1043/p. 188, not. Joost van de Ven; 21 October 1644, SAA:NA 1861/462-3; 17 March 1646, Old Notarieel Archief, Rotterdam Municipal Archives (hereafter GAR:ONA), 334: 46/114, not. Arent van der Hraeff; 16 January 1644, GAR:ONA 248: 103/198, not. Jacob Duyfhuysen; 21 May 1635, *Winthrop's Journal, "History of New England," 1630-1649, Original Narratives of Early American History*, ed. James Kendall Hosmer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 151 (quotation). For more on the cruising trade see Klooster, “Anglo-Dutch Trade in the Seventeenth Century: An Atlantic Partnership?” in *Shaping the Stuart World, 1603-1714: The Atlantic Connection*, ed. Allan I. Macinnes and Arthur H. Williamson (Boston: Brill, 2006), 261-282, 267, 269-270; Enthoven and Klooster, “The Rise and Fall of the Virginia-Dutch Connection,” in *Early Modern Virginia*, ed. Bradburn and Coomes, 97-98.

11 Colt, “The Voyage of Sir Henry Colt Knight to ye Ilands of ye Antilleas,” circa 1631, in *Colonising Expeditions*, ed. Harlow, 101; Deposition of Thomas Murthwaithe, 21 February

Soon, English authorities began to complain that Anglo-Dutch trade was eroding English custom duties, prompting Charles I to order colonists in the Chesapeake and the “islands of St. Christopher’s, Barbadoes, and the other Caribbee Islands” to end their trade with the Dutch. Particularly worrisome to Charles was the news that his colonists had become so dependent on Dutch imports of foodstuffs that they had not planted “corn and grain sufficient for the support of those plantations.”<sup>12</sup> Eager to capture the duties tobacco produced and hopeful that the colonies could become self-sustainable enough to produce even greater returns, the English government was beginning to understand that if they wanted to benefit most from colonial endeavors they would need to regulate trade. Colonists, though, saw things differently. Instead of trying to prevent foreign trade in Barbados, for example, Governor Henry Hawley decided to capitalize on it, requiring that all foreign ships that “Anchor here, for Relief, Refreshment, or Trade...pay to the Governor Twenty Shillings in Money, or Goods” and then a further “Seven *per Cent* on all the Goods” sold while in port.<sup>13</sup> Not only would Anglo-Dutch commerce provide needed trade for Hawley’s nascent colony, it would also help to fund the island’s development.

As a whole, through the 1630s Anglo-Dutch trade in the Americas relied upon loosely organized speculative ventures that involved vessels arriving from great distances hoping to trade at English ports. Leading these ventures were most commonly Dutch sojourners looking for immediate trading opportunities. English colonists welcomed Dutch vessels but they played small roles in initiating trade. As ad hoc as this exchange was during the 1620s and 1630s, the growing metropolitan resistance to allowing foreign merchants to benefit from the English colonies reveals how prevalent it had become. These efforts

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1632/3, Robert South and Maurice Thomson v. King, in *English Adventurers and Emigrants, 1630–1660: Abstracts of Examinations in the High Court of Admiralty with Reference to colonial America*, ed. Peter Wilson Coldham (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1984), 39; Deposition of Richard Cooper, 8 January 1639/40, Mary Limbre v. Willson, High Court of the Admiralty (hereafter HCA) 13/55, fol. 439, The National Archives of the United Kingdom—Public Records Office, Kew, England (hereafter TNA:PRO).

12 “An open warrant directed to his majesties Attorney Generall,” 24 February 1632, *Acts of the Privy Council: Colonial Series*, vol. 1, 1613–80, ed. W.L. Grant and James Munro (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1908), 174–176; “The King to [the feoffees of Jas. Late Earl of Carlisle],” April 1637, *Calendar of State Papers: Colonial Series, America and the West Indies, 1574–1660*, ed. W. Noel Sainsbury (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1860), 251 (hereafter CSPC).

13 William Duke, *Memoirs of the First Settlement of the Island of Barbados, and other the Caribbee Islands* (London, 1743), 18.

to limit Anglo-Dutch exchange, in turn, indicate that within the first decade of settlement it was becoming increasingly clear that English colonists and metropolitan officials had begun to develop different understandings about the role Dutch trade should play in imperial development.

### Building Networks, 1640s–1650s

With a firm foundation based on ad hoc interaction the domestic turmoil of the 1640s helped transform Anglo-Dutch trade in the Atlantic and thrust Dutch traders into a more central position in English colonial economies. Key to the evolution of more intensive Anglo-Dutch networks in these decades was the expansion of tobacco and sugar cultivation in the English colonies and the disruptions to trade the English Civil War (1642–1646) caused. These developments enhanced opportunities for Dutch traders who rushed to take advantage of English colonists' unmet needs. What metropolitan Dutch merchants found, however, was that in order to intensify their trade with English plantations in the Caribbean and Chesapeake, they would need to improve on the cruising trade which increasingly proved unsatisfactory in building stable trade. The Dutch shipmaster David Pietersz. de Vries realized this in 1635 when he called at Virginia. Sailing from the Caribbean to New Amsterdam De Vries hoped to purchase tobacco in Virginia before continuing on his voyage but "as it was out of season to obtain tobacco," he was forced to "let...[his] cargo lie [t]here." Giving "directions to trade [it] when the crop of tobacco should be ripe," he continued on to New Amsterdam. When he returned in September, however, De Vries found his instructions had not been followed and he was unable to obtain a cargo.<sup>14</sup> The shipmaster's experience indicates the disadvantages inherent in the cruising trade: it depended upon arriving to trade at exactly the right moment and without a permanent Dutch presence in the colonies it was difficult to arrange convenient and reliable exchange.

To address these deficiencies Dutch traders began to rely upon local Dutch agents to direct trade. In the Chesapeake, Dutch firms accomplished this by either sending factors to live in English colonies, or by using those based in nearby New Amsterdam. Two of the most prominent Dutch agents to take up residence in Virginia during this period were the brothers Derrick Cornelisz. and Arent Cornelisz. Stam. The Stams arrived in Virginia as the representatives of Killiaen van Rensselaer, the founder of the colony of Rensselaerswyck.

14 David Pietersz. de Vries, *Voyages from Holland to America: 1632–1644*, trans. Henry C. Murphy (New York, 1853), 107–113.

Initially on the scene to organize trade for the patroon, the Stams decided to stay. By 1639 they had purchased property on Virginia's Eastern Shore, a place where Dutch traders found much opportunity, and were organizing trade for a number of Amsterdam merchants. In 1640 their network of planters was large enough to allow them to ship more than 60,000 pounds of tobacco to the Dutch Republic and a further 16,000 pounds to London. In 1641 the Stam's exports had reached 100,000 pounds, surpassing the trade of any individual London merchant.<sup>15</sup>

The growth of New Amsterdam as a commercial center in the 1640s further enabled Amsterdam firms to base their agents close to their tobacco suppliers. Living only a short sail from the Chesapeake, middlemen such as Govert Loockermans soon established strong ties in Virginia and Maryland. Loockermans, who had arrived in New Amsterdam as an employee of the Dutch West India Company (WIC), organized trade for years for the prominent Amsterdam merchant Gillis Verbrugge.<sup>16</sup> Able to journey back and forth between his Dutch base in New Amsterdam and the Chesapeake plantations, Loockermans and others like him were able to efficiently manage their employers' fleets, coordinate the arrival of European goods, and prepare tobacco shipments. Moreover, with New Amsterdam's residents now producing grain and lumber and importing horses and salted fish, local Dutch factors could respond

15 "English Translations of Notarial Documents in the Gemeentearchief Amsterdam Pertaining to North America," 28 December 1639, 1499/pp. 179–180, not. Jan Volckaertsz. Oli, Historic Hudson Valley, Tarrytown, N.Y. (hereafter HHV GAA NA); 30 July 1640, HHV GAA:NA 1555/pg. 113, not. Jan Volckaertsz. Oli; 26 November 1642, HHV GAA:NA 1501/p. 165, not. Jan Volckaertsz. Oli; John R. Pagan, "Dutch Maritime and Commercial Activity in Mid-Seventeenth-Century Virginia," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 90 (1982): 485–501, 486–487; Kupp, "Dutch Notarial Acts Relating to the Tobacco Trade in Virginia," 653–655; Enthoven and Klooster, "The Rise and Fall of the Virginia-Dutch Connection," in *Early Modern Virginia*, ed. Bradburn and Coomes, 104–105 (quotation). For the Dutch presence on the Eastern Shore see Susie M. Ames, *Studies of the Virginia Eastern Shore in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Russell & Russel, 1973), chapter 3.

16 Verbrugge and Son to Loockermans, 17 December 1649, Stuyvesant Family, Misc. MSS, New-York Historical Society (hereafter NYHS); David M. Riker, "Govert Loockermans: Free Merchant of New Amsterdam," *de Halve Maen* 54 (1981): 4–10; Oliver A. Rink, *Holland on the Hudson: An Economic and Social History of Dutch New York* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 177–180. For numerous examples of the commercial ties between New Amsterdam and Virginia see Kenneth Scott and Kenn Stryker-Rodda, ed., *New York Historical Manuscripts: Dutch, The Register of Solomon Lachaire, Notary Public of New Amsterdam, 1661–1662* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1978), esp. 27, 90–91, 126–128, 133–134, 159–160, 182–184, 196–197, 205–206, 213–216.

to Virginians' immediate demands better than those merchants who depended on supercargoes traveling directly from the Netherlands.

While most Dutch trade to the Caribbean and Chesapeake depended upon metropolitan organization through the 1640s, increasingly Dutch colonists living in New Amsterdam came to direct and initiate the Chesapeake's Anglo-Dutch trade themselves. As tobacco prices fell in the late 1640s and as English mercantilist laws and the First Anglo-Dutch War (1652–1654) made bilateral trade from the Dutch Republic more difficult, traders in nearby New Amsterdam found greater opportunities. With extensive experience as agents of Dutch firms, New Amsterdam traders like Loockermans soon gained control of Anglo-Dutch trade in the Chesapeake.<sup>17</sup>

In the English Caribbean where ready access to a nearby Dutch community was not an option, metropolitan firms and their agents remained in control of Anglo-Dutch trade into the 1650s. To overcome the managerial deficiencies of the cruising trade Dutch traders there began to take up residence in English colonies and to establish storehouses. By 1652 Dutch merchants living in the English Leeward Islands had established at least five warehouses in St. Christopher and several in Montserrat from which to direct their trade.<sup>18</sup> Also serving Antigua and Nevis, these storehouses allowed Dutch traders to purchase tobacco, sugar, and other tropical produce over an extended period and then to quickly load it into arriving Dutch vessels. Being able to prepare cargoes in advance of ships' arrivals increased efficiency and lowered transaction costs. Moreover, having a physical presence in the islands made it easier for the agents to offer credit to planters who were desperate to meet rising capital costs. In turn, Dutch traders used their enhanced position to routinely beat English competitors on price. According to one official in St. Christopher, Dutch merchants sold "shewes at 12 [pounds of tobacco]...and shirts [,] Cassocks and drawers at the same price." Without Dutch trade, he contended, "the Countrey payes 40 and 50 [pounds]...ready tobaccoe for the like" goods.<sup>19</sup>

17 Hatfield, "Dutch and New Netherland Merchants in the Seventeenth-Century English Chesapeake," in *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Coclanis, 205–228; Rink, *Holland on the Hudson*, 178–179. On falling tobacco prices, Russell R. Menard, "Plantation Empire: How Sugar and Tobacco Planters Built Their Industries and Raised an Empire," *Agricultural History* 81, no. 3 (2007): 309–332, 316–321.

18 "Mountserrat and Antigua accoumpts, 1654 to 1656," Egerton MSS. 2395, fols. 54–59, British Library, London, England (hereafter BL); "Nevis and St. Christopher's Accounts," Egerton MSS. 2395, fols. 69–77, BL.

19 William Johnson to Trustees, 10 March 1642, Hay MSS, BL, cited in J.H. Bennett, "The English Caribbees in the Period of the Civil War, 1642–1646," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 24 (1967): 359–377, 364–365; Christopher Jeaffreson to Colonel George Gamiell,

Not fully abandoning the cruising trade, Dutch merchants' decision to establish trading bases in the English Caribbean during the 1640s and 1650s indicates their optimism about the prospects of Anglo-Dutch exchange.

While the mechanisms they used to trade and the make-up of their networks changed during the 1640s and 1650s, the pattern of Anglo-Dutch exchange remained constant. Backed by the credit markets of Amsterdam and the commercial advantages of the Dutch empire, Dutch traders both beat English merchants on freight and merchandise prices and were able to supply goods when their English rivals could not. These included manufactured goods such as "browd-brimmd white or black hatts," "new fashioned shoes," "whyted osenbridge linen," and glazed earthenware as well as provisions such as meat, butter, and wine. Dutch merchants were also important suppliers of horses to drive the planters' mills.<sup>20</sup> The situation was similar in the Chesapeake where, as the Directors of the WIC noted, English colonists "receive from their own nation in England no such goods as they need" and instead buy these things from the Dutch.<sup>21</sup>

The full extent of Anglo-Dutch trade is almost impossible to quantify, but nevertheless several snapshots of the situation during these decades reveal its growing importance. In Virginia, for example, David Pietersz. de Vries found that of a total of 34 vessels engaged in the tobacco trade there

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12 May 1677, in "A Young Squire of the Seventeenth Century." *From the Papers of Christopher Jeaffreson, of Dullingham House, Cambridgeshire*, ed. John C. Jeaffreson (London: Hurst and Blackett Publishers, 1878), 1: 214–217; Lydia Mihelio Pulsipher, "The Cultural Landscape of Montserrat, West Indies, in the Seventeenth Century: Early Environmental Consequences of British Colonial Development" (unpublished PhD diss., Southern Illinois University, 1977), 38–43; Richard Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623–1775* (Barbados: Caribbean University Press, 1974), 269–274.

20 "A Letter from Barbados by ye Way of Holland Concerning ye Conditcon of Honest men There," 9 August 1651, in *Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana*, ed. Harlow, 51–52 (quotations); Richard Ligon, *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbados...*, 2nd ed. (London, 1673), 30, 37. See also "The State of y<sup>e</sup> Differences as it is pressed between y<sup>e</sup> Merchants and y<sup>e</sup> Planters in relations to free Trade att y<sup>e</sup> Charibee Islands," [n.d., 1655–58], British Library Transcripts, Add. Mss. 11411 (original fol. 3r, 4v), 7–8, Library of Congress (hereafter LOC); Anon., "An Account of the English Sugar Plantations," (n.d., time of Charles II), Egerton MSS 2395, fols. 629–635, BL. For discussion of English planters' preference for Dutch traders during this period, see Bennett, "The English Caribbees in the Period of the Civil War," 362–364; V.T. Harlow, *A History of Barbados, 1625–1685* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 93–94.

21 WIC Directors to Stuyvesant, 14 June 1656, *Correspondence, 1654–1658*, in *New Netherland Documents*, vol. 12, ed. Charles T. Gehring (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 92–93.



in 1643, only four were Dutch. Five years later, however, that number had risen to 12 of 31. Historian John Pagan estimates that between 1643 and 1649 33 Dutch vessels voyaged to Virginia, up from four six years earlier.<sup>22</sup> In Barbados, the island for which we have the best evidence, seven or eight and as many as 30 Dutch vessels a year called at Barbados between 1640 and 1660, making up between 10 and 20 percent of the total number of ships arriving at the port.<sup>23</sup>

What statistics fail to capture are the circumstances under which Dutch merchants traded at English colonies like Barbados. These conditions reveal much more about the importance of Anglo-Dutch exchange to the English empire. The 1640s and 1650s were years of rapid transformation in Barbados as planters shifted away from tobacco, cotton, and ginger into sugar, a crop they had only recently learned to cultivate and process. While new research has overturned scholars' earlier belief that Dutch merchants introduced sugar to Barbados and financed its cultivation, it is clear that Dutch trade helped to sustain the colony.<sup>24</sup> Because planters had to import plantation supplies, manufactured goods, and a great portion of their provisions, access to ready trade at good prices was vital. And with English merchants often unable to meet their needs (especially when the Civil War disrupted trade), Dutch merchants who supplied English colonists with "manufactures, brewed beer, linen cloth, brandies,...duffels, [and] coarse cloth" were always welcome, especially when they could rescue English settlers from "exteme ruin" with "food and raiment" as one group of Dutch traders noted.<sup>25</sup> As islanders scrambled to cultivate sugarcane and invest in sugar-works in Barbados and to find markets for their tobacco in the Chesapeake, Dutch merchants helped support their plantations.

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22 De Vries, *Voyages from Holland to America*, 112, 118; Hatfield, "Dutch and New Netherland Merchants in the Seventeenth-Century English Chesapeake," 205–228; and Schnurmann, "Atlantic Trade and American Identities," 187–189, both in *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Coclanis; Pagan, "Dutch Maritime and Commercial Activity in Mid-Seventeenth-Century Virginia," 485–487.

23 Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*, 72.

24 Russel Menard, *Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), chapters 1–3, esp. 11–12, 50–51, 61; Larry Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted: The English Colonization of Barbados, 1627–1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 99–100, 141; John J. McCusker and Russell Menard, "The Sugar Industry in the Seventeenth Century," in *Tropical Babylons: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450–1680*, ed. Stuart B. Schwartz (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 289–330, 294–306.

25 "Petition of certain Dutch merchants to the States General," November 1651, *DRCHNY*, 1: 436–437.

An even clearer indication of the importance of Dutch trade to English colonies was planters' reaction to English efforts to exclude the Dutch from colonial trade. As part of English state-builders' broader attempt to gain commercial dominance over the Dutch Republic, in 1650 and 1651 Parliament enacted the first two of what would be a series of provisions designed to take control of England's Atlantic colonial trade. Parliament aimed the Act of 1650 at subduing those colonies that still had not acknowledged their supremacy by placing an embargo on their commerce, in so doing making it clear that it was in their power to regulate colonial trade. The second more sweeping of these laws, the Act of Trade and Navigation (1651), attempted to damage Dutch commerce and to capture colonial trade for English merchants by confining overseas exchange to English ships and stipulating that the bulk of colonial trade must pass through England.<sup>26</sup>

In response to metropolitan efforts to halt Anglo-Dutch exchange colonists petitioned their government to change course and restore the relatively free trade they had formerly enjoyed. It was in Barbados and Virginia where colonists most clearly articulated this position. Barbadians, for example, greeted Parliament's new laws with a robust defense of Dutch trade. "All the old *Planters* [of Barbados]," they wrote, "well know how much they have ben houlding to the *Dutch* for their subsistence, and how difficult it would have ben (without their assistances) ever to have settled" the island. In a period in which they had been desperate for goods it was Dutch merchants who had brought them "necessary comforts" and sold "their *Commodities*" much "cheaper" than did merchants of their "own nation." This feeling was so widespread, the Assembly and Council contended, that they could "not imagine that there is so meane & base minded a fellow amongst us, that will not prefer...[trade with] an honorable *Dutch*, before being bound by the regulations of the *Parliament*."<sup>27</sup>

In Virginia, colonists likewise defended their colony's reliance on Dutch trade. Former Virginia merchant John Bland captured this position best. Targeting the

26 Lawrence A. Harper, *The English Navigation Laws: A Seventeenth-Century Experiment in Social Engineering* (1939; repr., New York: Octagon Books, 1964), 39–49; Charles H. Wilson, *Profit and Power: A Study of England and the Dutch Wars* (New York: Longmans and Green, 1957), 48–77; Michael J. Braddick, "The English Government, War, Trade, and Settlement, 1625–1688," in *The Origins of Empire*, ed. Nicholas Canny, vol. 1, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. Wm Roger Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 286–308, 292–296.

27 Council and Assembly of Barbados, *A Declaration Set forth by the Lord Lieutenant Generall and the Gentlemen of the Councill & Assembly occasioned from the view of a printed paper entituled An Act Prohibiting trade with the Barbados, Virginea, Bermudes and Antegoe* (The Hague, 1651), 2–3 (emphasis in original).

1660 Navigation Act Bland pointed out that Dutch trade was indispensable to Virginia because English merchants neglected the colony. "If the Hollanders must not trade to *Virginia* how shall the Planters dispose of their Tobacco... [if] The English *will* not buy it[?]." "Debarring the Hollanders" from the Chesapeake, he continued, "will utterly ruin the colonies commerce and customs together in a short time; for if the Inhabitants be destroyed, of necessity the Trade there must cease."<sup>28</sup> In an effort to alleviate the risk England's mercantilist legislation presented to their livelihoods, Dutch and English colonists worked to formalize their commercial relationship. Most active in this attempt was New Netherland's Director-General Petrus Stuyvesant who sent emissaries to Virginia and traveled to Barbados himself in order to negotiate free trade pacts. Unrecognized by metropolitan authorities these agreements testify to the importance colonists from both empires placed on Anglo-Dutch exchange.<sup>29</sup>

British colonists' heralding of the role Dutch traders played in their economies and their efforts to maintain these links during the 1650s reflects their view that it had been Anglo-Dutch trade in the previous four decades that had made settlement possible. For these colonists, writing in the midst of sustained British efforts to eliminate foreign trade in the colonies and to create an exclusive empire, the Dutch stood for an earlier cross-national legacy that they believed provided the best means to structure an imperial economy. Colonists' celebration of Anglo-Dutch trade therefore was the product of both a distinctive interimperial commercial culture and of ongoing colonial efforts to resist what they considered burdensome and dangerous imperial policies.

### New Strategies for Illegal Trade, 1660s–80s

Despite colonial resistance, between 1660 and 1688 England's new Restoration government maintained and enhanced Commonwealth policies designed to

28 "The humble Remonstrance of John Bland of London, merchants, on the behalf of the Inhabitants and Planters in Virginia and Mariland," in "Virginia and the Act of Navigation," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 1 (1893–1894): 141–155, 147, 151.

29 "Articles of amitie and commerce . . ." (1660) in *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and Its Dependencies*, ed. Frances Gardiner Davenport (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1929), 2: 55–56; Edward Winslow to Secretary Thurloe, 17 March 1654/5, in *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe*, ed. Thomas Birch (London, 1742), 3: 251; Carla Gardiner Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640–1661* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 173–174; April Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 49–50.

end Anglo-Dutch trade in the colonies. New laws and the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665–1667) worked to make interimperial exchange more difficult but, because these laws did not eliminate the circumstances that made it desirable, the regulations did not end Dutch trade in English colonies. In fact in some ways the passage of additional Navigation Acts in 1660, 1663, and 1673 actually increased opportunity for illegal commerce and enhanced its importance for colonial economies. By restricting “enumerated goods” like tobacco and sugar to English ships and markets and giving English exporters a monopoly on supplying many goods to the colonies, the laws often inadvertently pushed down the prices planters received for their produce and inflated the cost of imports.<sup>30</sup> Planters in Barbados and the Leeward Islands noticed these effects almost immediately. In 1661 settlers there began to petition the king and parliament to remove the Navigation Acts and allow them “to transport their produce...to any port in amity with his Majesty” as a way of avoiding the “glut, and a still further fall in the value of sugar” that must be the result of having their sugar “forced into one market.”<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile English West Indians also soon found that lower sugar prices reduced their wealth and diminished English traders’ interest. English “merchants,” they complained in 1661, “bring noe Commoditiyes” to their islands but “emptie shippes” to load their sugar.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, Jamaica’s governor reported that Dutch traders who benefited from low Dutch shipping costs and who avoided costly English duties routinely sold European goods in the West Indies and did so between 20 and 30 percent cheaper and “paye[d] deerer for American Goods.”<sup>33</sup> The concurrent lack of sufficient English shipping and the better prices Dutch traders offered meant that colonists around the British Atlantic worked to maintain Anglo-Dutch trade because it was economically rewarding.

In order to capitalize on the continued opportunity, both parties involved in Anglo-Dutch trade had to adapt the mechanics of their trade. The expulsion of Dutch residents from some English colonies and a more robust regulatory

30 There is a great deal of debate about the extent and role of illegal trade in British colonial economies. To begin compare John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607–1789, With Supplementary Bibliography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985, 1991), 77–78 with Jarvis, *In the Eye of all Trade*, 182–184.

31 “Petition of the President, Council and Assembly of Barbados to His Majesty’s Commissioners for Foreign Plantations,” 11 May 1661, *CSPC*, 1661–8, 30.

32 The President and Council of Barbados to [Sec. Nicholas], 10 July 1661, CO 1/15, fol. 133r, TNA:PRO.

33 Sir Thomas Lynch to Lords of Trade and Plantations, 29 August 1682, CO 1/49, fol. 33v, TNA:PRO; Samuel Hayne, *An abstract of all the statutes made concerning aliens* (London, 1685), 10–14.

regime meant that it was more difficult for Dutch agents to remain in English colonies than it had been a decade before. The solution was for colonists to smuggle or to work within the regulatory framework to give a veneer of legality to what was more often illegal trade. Smuggling was the option that most Anglo-Dutch traders chose in the Caribbean. Here the close proximity of Dutch islands stocked with inventories of European goods and the difficulties authorities had in constantly monitoring miles of coastline scattered across a half-dozen or more English islands encouraged illicit trade. The Dutch colony most important in facilitating this exchange was St. Eustatius. Located amidst the English Leeward Islands and just a short sail from each colony, Dutch traders used Statia as a base from which they could venture to English colonies. The common practice was for Dutch merchants to call at English islands in small sloops and boats when tobacco and sugar harvests were coming in, a variety of trade at the water's edge reminiscent of that which colonists had used in the 1630s.<sup>34</sup> For planters in Barbados and Jamaica, Curaçao offered the same opportunities that Statia did for those in the Leewards, and trade between these islands was commonplace in the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>35</sup> In the Chesapeake – which likewise had an extensive coastline – Dutch traders used similar methods and benefited from close access to New Netherland.<sup>36</sup>

Reliant upon subterfuge and good timing, illicit commerce succeeded in allowing trade but it often worked against colonists' ability to build reliable and stable Anglo-Dutch networks. Nevertheless some in both North America and the West Indies did succeed in blending Dutch and English capital, experience, and connections to extend their trade. By employing

34 "Report of Captain George St. Loe," May 1687, CO 1/62, fols. 224–225r, TNA:PRO.

35 "Extraordinary session held in the residence of the honorable vice-director M. Beck," 21 February 1656 and M. Beck to P. Stuyvesant, 21 March 1656, in *Curacao Papers 1640–1665*, *New Netherland Documents*, vol. 17, ed. Charles T. Gehring and J.A. Schiltkamp (Interlaken, NY: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1987), 87–88, 91; 31 August 1676, Mayor's Court Minutes (1675–1677), County Clerk's Office, Division of Old Records, New York City, unpaginated; Stephen A. Fortune, *Merchants and Jews: The Struggle for British West Indian Commerce, 1650–1715* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 1984), chaps. 3–4; Klooster, "Curaçao and the Caribbean Transit Trade," in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce*, ed. Postma and Enthoven, 203–218.

36 *The Register of Solomon Lachaire*, ed. Scott and Stryker-Rodda, 27, 90–91, 126–128, 133–134, 159–160, 182–184, 196–197, 205–206, 213–216; Hatfield, "Mariners, Merchants, and Colonists in Seventeenth-Century English America," in *The Creation of the British Atlantic World*, ed. Mancke and Shammas, 151–152; Dennis J. Maika, "Commerce and Community: Manhattan Merchants in the Seventeenth Century" (unpublished PhD diss., New York University, 1995), 120–123.

English partners alongside of those from the Dutch Republic, colonists had the added advantage of making Anglo-Dutch trade legal. The groups of merchants who most fully integrated Dutch and English networks were those Dutch colonists who remained in New York following the English conquest of 1664. After a brief period in which direct trade with the Netherlands was legal, the Navigation Acts increasingly complicated Dutch New Yorkers' access to former trading partners in the Netherlands and in turn hurt American planters who had come to depend on them as intermediaries for Dutch trade. To remedy the situation New Yorkers learned to exploit a provision in the Navigation Acts that allowed English vessels to travel between the colonies and foreign ports provided they stopped to pay duties in an English port. Benefiting from England's decision to give Dutch New Yorkers denization, merchants, such as longtime New Yorker Frederick Philipse, routinely sent their vessels between New York and Amsterdam during the 1670s, often stopping at Dover, Portsmouth, or Falmouth to pay duties. Over time traders like Philipse cultivated relationships with Englishmen in these ports to receive the vessels and pay the duties. Though many of these voyages were legal, New Yorkers also began to exploit the outport trade by concealing portions of their Dutch cargoes to avoid burdensome duties.<sup>37</sup> Other times New Yorkers stood in for silent Dutch partners who were the true freighters and organizers of some ventures, even going to significant lengths to make Dutch vessels appear to be English by hiring English captains and crews and falsifying registration records.<sup>38</sup>

37 E 190/1044/18; E 190/1044/12; E 190/1045/26; E 190/833-1, E 190/833-2, TNA:PRO; *The Dongan Papers: Admiralty Court and Other Records of the Administration of New York Governor Thomas Dongan*, ed. Peter R. Christoph, *New York Historical Manuscript Series* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993), 1: 171-172, 270-272; *Journal of Jasper Danckaerts*, ed. Bartlett Burleigh James and J. Franklin Jameson (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1913), 25-32; Maika, "Commerce and Community," 389-398; Robert Ritchie, *The Duke's Province: A Study of New York Politics and Society, 1654-1691* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 109; Schnurman, "Atlantic Trade and American Identities," in *The Atlantic Economy*, ed. Coclanis, 192-196.

38 12 April 1670, HHV GAA:NA 3504 V/30, not. Gerrit van Breugel; 3 May 1670, HHV GAA:NA 3502 VI/22, not. Gerrit van Breugel; 6 June 1670, HHV GAA:NA 3494 I/44, not. Gerrit van Breugel; 11 June 1670, HHV GAA:NA 3504 I/40, not. Gerrit van Breugel; 5 August 1670, HHV GAA:NA 3501 VI/45, not. Gerrit van Breugel; 20 August 1671, HHV GAA:NA 2301/pp. 73-74, not. Jacob de Winter; *New York Historical Manuscripts English: Books of General Entries of the Colony of New York, 1664-1688*, ed. Peter R. Christoph and Florence A. Christoph (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 1982) 1: 235-238; Kupp, "Aspects of Dutch-New York Trade," 141-146.

Even in Barbados where there were few who had direct access to Dutch networks some colonists secured Anglo-Dutch trade through a similar blending of Dutch and English contacts. Rather than relying upon Dutchmen, however, Barbadians benefited from Bridgetown's Jewish population. Resident in Barbados from at least the 1650s, the mostly Sephardic Jewish community maintained extensive international networks that spanned the Atlantic. Profiting from these extensive connections and the lower transactions costs that kinship and religious ties provided early modern merchants, Jewish settlers, including the more than 300 who lived in Barbados in 1680, were important for Atlantic trade.<sup>39</sup> English customs official Samuel Hayne nicely illustrated an example of how Jewish traders connected English colonists with Dutch markets in a 1685 pamphlet. In 1680 Hayne intercepted the 300-ton *Experiment* bound from Barbados to Amsterdam. Though this vessel had landed in Falmouth to pay duties the master did not unload "her whole Cargo" as the law stipulated. When Hayne investigated further, he found "one hundred Butts and upwards" of sugar along with tobacco, ginger, and fustic (a dyestuff) belonging to more than thirty different Barbadians hidden in the hold. This voyage, Hayne later determined, had been instigated by a group of Amsterdam Jewish merchants who used family connections in Barbados and England to organize the venture.<sup>40</sup>

In the face of increased English efforts to disrupt Anglo-Dutch networks, Atlantic traders from both empires adapted their practices between 1660 and 1688. No longer were their ties as close or permanent as they had been in previous decades, but nonetheless both groups still found ways to come together for profitable exchange. At the same time, these years saw colonists continue to

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39 There is an extensive literature on the Jewish Diaspora and Jewish traders' role in commerce. For the Caribbean begin with Fortune, *Merchants and Jews*, 71–77; Gordon Merrill, "The Role of the Sephardic Jews in the British Caribbean Area during the Seventeenth Century," *Caribbean Studies Journal* 4 (1964): 32–49, 33–39; Daniel M Swetschinski, "Conflict and Opportunity in 'Europe's Other Sea': The Adventure of Caribbean Jewish Settlement," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 72 (1982): 212–232; and the essays in *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500–1800*, ed. Richard L. Kagan and Philip D. Morgan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), especially Holly Snyder, "English Markets, Jewish Merchants, and Atlantic Endeavors: Jews and the Making of British Transatlantic Commercial Culture, 1650–1800," 50–74. For connections between the Jewish communities of New Amsterdam/New York and the Caribbean, Noah L. Gelfand, "A Transatlantic Approach to Understanding the Formation of a Jewish Community in New Netherland and New York," *New York History* 89, no. 4 (2008): 375–395.

40 Hayne, *An abstract of all the statutes*, 15–38.

push for a relaxation of the Navigation Acts so as to make Anglo-Dutch trade legal. This was particularly important when natural disasters or other exogenous events disrupted usual trade. Suffering from a deficit of trade during and immediately after the Second Anglo-Dutch War, for example, English West Indians launched a letter-writing campaign to the king and parliament which was typical of colonists' and their supporters' arguments for free trade in these years. In their petition, colonists used their suffering from the lack of trade and the danger this presented to both their own and the empire's wealth as evidence of the folly of trade restrictions. More significantly, colonists called upon their past experience with the benefits of cross-national trade in arguing for the right to "export...commodities to any place in amity with England, in English bottoms, on paying customs either in Barbadoes or in England."<sup>41</sup> Evoking the wealth and success of their "former daies" during which "the *Dutch* were very beneficial to us," colonists urged a return to the policies that had enabled them to flourish. Such a move would, planters contended, in turn benefit the empire as their success translated into imperial success.<sup>42</sup>

It is possible to see illegal Anglo-Dutch trade as driven by naked self-interest, and surely, for some, it was. At the same time, however, that colonists simultaneously smuggled and lobbied parliament and the crown to allow Anglo-Dutch trade throughout the second half of the seventeenth century suggests a more complicated story. For those who bore the risks, smuggling could be richly rewarding and politically powerful planters and merchants – including assemblymen, councilors and governors like Christopher Codrington of the Leeward Islands – engaged in illegal trade.<sup>43</sup> But that these same men also petitioned for Dutch trade to be made legal – an act which would eliminate the risks that made smuggling so attractive and had helped create their wealth – suggests that many colonists pursued illicit trade not only because of self-interest but also because they had made the reasoned decision that open trade

41 Gov. Lord Willoughby to the King, 12 May 1666, *CSPC*, 1661–8, 282–283; Willoughby and the Council of Barbados to the King, 29 September 1666, *CSPC*, 1661–8, 412–413; Willoughby to the King, July 1667, *CSPC*, 1661–8, 487; Petition of the Representatives for Barbadoes to the King, 5 September 1667, *CSPC*, 1661–8, 495 (quotation).

42 Edward Littleton, *The Groans of the Plantations: Or a True Account of their Grievous and Extreme Sufferings By the Heavy Impositions upon Sugar, And other Hardships Relating more particularly to the Island of Barbados* (London, 1689), 5 (second quotation), 16 (first quotation).

43 "Memorial of the Leeward Islands being complaints against the Governor & was sent to ye Board in a Penny post without date or name," 4 March 1697/8, CO 152/2, fols. 182r–85r, TNA-PRO; Vincent T. Harlow, *Christopher Codrington, 1668–1710* (1928; repr., London: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 32–34.



would best allow their colonies, and thus the empire, to prosper. In this way, British colonists' experience with Dutch trade continued to shape their understanding of the empire's structure.

### Local Adjustments to War, 1690s–1730s

In the 1690s and first decade of the eighteenth century imperial developments once again made trade more difficult for all and thus encouraged intercolonial trade. The War of the League of Augsburg (1689–1697) and the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1713) – chiefly Anglo-French wars – interrupted Atlantic trade, led to the capture of hundreds of English, Dutch (who fought alongside the English), and French merchantmen, and distracted European merchants. In British America the wars resulted in a scarcity of goods, higher freight and insurance costs, and a slump in trade.<sup>44</sup> While making transatlantic trade more burdensome and expensive, the wars had the opposite effect on intercolonial shipping. To meet their continuing needs many colonists increasingly sought out trade at surrounding colonies. Because geography facilitated this practice it was in the Caribbean where most Anglo-Dutch exchange continued after the 1680s. The decentralized and self-organized Atlantic commerce that emerged in this period helped support colonial economies and overcome wars' disturbances.

By using small vessels that embarked on short voyages colonial traders could better avoid the hazards of privateers and adjust to rapidly changing circumstances. Particularly important in this trade were Dutchmen operating in emerging commercial nodes such as St. Eustatius, Curaçao, and increasingly the Danish-owned but Dutch-dominated St. Thomas. Though Dutch shippers faced the same risks as English merchantmen during these two conflicts, many British colonists found that “the Dutch our neighbours” could sell goods they “wanted at easy rates.”<sup>45</sup> Dutch merchants had established this interisland

44 Gov. Codrington to Lords of Trade and Plantations, 4 June 1690, *CSPC*, 1689–92, 278; Gov. Kendall to Lords of Trade and Plantations, 22 August 1690, *CSPC*, 1689–93, 311; “Extract from a letter of Sir William Beeston to William Blathwayt,” 18 March 1697, *CSPC*, 1696–7, 403–404; William Thomas Morgan, “The British West Indies during King William’s War (1689–97),” *Journal of Modern History* 2 (1930): 378–409; Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry: In the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Newton Abbot, England: David and Charles, 1962), 316–319, 324, 327–328, 334; Douglas Bradburn, “The Visible Fist: The Chesapeake Tobacco Trade in War and the Purpose of Empire, 1690–1715,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser. 68, no. 3 (2011): 361–386, 375–377.

45 “Extract from a letter of Sir William Beeston to William Blathwayt,” 18 March 1697, *CSPC*, 1696–7, 403–404.

West Indian sloop trade during the mid-seventeenth century but the warfare between 1689 and 1713 enhanced its importance for Anglo-Dutch trade, a situation which would persist in later decades. Moreover, with larger and more diverse mercantile communities developing in the first half of the eighteenth century, increasingly British colonists began to take the initiative in driving trade.

Every year hundreds of vessels engaged in the Atlantic coasting trade, but because the best evidence of this interimperial sloop trade comes from general descriptions and Dutch and English shipping registers, the precise shape of the networks that made it possible remain obscure.<sup>46</sup> It is likely, though, that this trade relied less on stable networks than on improvisational decision making. Merchants and shipmasters active in the sloop trade knew the location of markets and the timing of trade, but likely had little knowledge of whom they were going to trade with when they arrived in exchange nodes like St. Thomas, St. Eustatius, and Curaçao. Instead they relied upon their long experience, their familiarity with each port's mercantile community, and what intelligence they could gather about prices and commercial conditions to arrange wharf-side exchanges.

The makeup of interisland cargoes in the early eighteenth century generally resembled those of previous years. English West Indians continued to send sugar and other plantation goods to Dutch islands where they sought provisions, European goods, and other plantation supplies, like lumber and, over time, slaves. Again the extent of this trade is unclear. In 1701 Governor Christopher Codrington claimed that colonists secreted "many millions of sugars to St. Eustatius, Curaçao and Danish St. Thomas" from the Leeward Islands each year.<sup>47</sup> Though enslaved Africans never constituted a large percentage of Anglo-Dutch trade in the early modern Caribbean, it was during the warfare of the 1690s and early eighteenth century when they did expand their role.

46 The lists for Barbados can be found at CO 33/13–5, TNA:PRO; for the Leeward Islands at CO 157/1, TNA:PRO; for Jamaica at CO 142/13–15, TNA:PRO. For the Dutch records see the discussion in Cornelis Ch. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas, 1680–1791* (Dover, NH: Van Gorcum, 1985), 81–95, 189–200; Victor Enthoven, "'That Abominable Nest of Pirates': St. Eustatius and the North Americans, 1680–1780," *Anglo-Dutch Revolutions*, ed. Nathan Perl-Rosenthal and Evan Haefeli, special issue, *Early American Studies* 10, no. 2 (2012): 239–301.

47 Gov. Codrington to the Council of Trade and Plantations, 30 June 1701, *CSPC*, 1701, 327–328. For two of the best descriptions of the sloop trade see Samuel Brise to the Council of Trade and Plantations, received 19 January 1710, CO 388/12, fol. 267, TNA:PRO; "Memorial of Mr. Holt relating to ye Trade carried on between Curacoa & St. Thomas and the British Plantations," received 15 December 1709, CO 388/12, fol. 251r–255r, 257r–261r, TNA:PRO.

The Anglo-French wars were especially damaging to the slave trade so when faced with shortages English planters turned to Dutch suppliers in Curaçao, St. Eustatius, and St. Thomas.<sup>48</sup>

Continuing to make Anglo-Dutch trade possible were middlemen who were well-placed to smooth commerce. While Dutch merchants living in Atlantic trading nodes remained valuable, of growing importance in organizing the sloop trade after 1700 were middling British West Indian merchants sometimes described as “mean persons” by island elites.<sup>49</sup> A product of British America’s expanding and diversifying economy, this new group of merchants began to shift the make-up of Anglo-Dutch cargoes. Still sending sugar, molasses, and rum to Dutch islands in exchange for dry goods, these traders, often acting as their own supercargoes and sometimes the masters of their own vessels, also began to re-export flour, lumber, and beef they imported from Boston, New York, and Philadelphia to surrounding Dutch and French islands.<sup>50</sup> One portion of this commercial community that was particularly important in smoothing interimperial trade was the Sephardic population. With cross-national networks that spanned the Atlantic it was Barbados’ Jewish merchants, for example, that provided that colony with its strongest ties to Curaçao, through the Henriquez/Senior family. In Nevis, it was the Pinheiro family whose contacts included those in Curaçao, South Carolina, Boston, New York City, and Amsterdam.<sup>51</sup>

48 William A. Pettigrew, “Free to Enslave: Politics and the Escalation of Britain’s Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1688–1714,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. ser., 64, no. 1 (2007): 3–38, 5n2; Johannes Postma, “A Reassessment of the Dutch Atlantic Slave Trade,” in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce*, ed. Postma and Enthoven, 134, 137; Johannes Postma, “The Dispersal of African Slaves in the West by Dutch Slave Traders, 1630–1803,” in *The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects on Economics, Societies, and Peoples in Africa, the Americas and Europe*, ed. Joseph E. Inikori and Staley L. Engerman (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 283–299, 293–297; Pedro Welch, “Intra-American and Caribbean Destinations and Transit Points for the Slave Trade,” *Journal of Caribbean History* 42, no. 1 (2008): 51–52.

49 William Popple to John Sansom, 22 January 1701/2, CO 153/7, p. 388, TNA:PRO.

50 “Memorial of Mr. Holt,” 15 December 1709, CO 388/12, fols. 251r–255r, 257r–261r, TNA:PRO; Samuel Brise to the Council of Trade and Plantations, received 19 January 1710, 388/12, fol. 267, TNA:PRO; “Peter Holt to Capt. William Bilton enclosed in Nov. 4, 1709, Mr. Burchett to Mr. Popple,” *CSPC*, 1708–9, 505–506.

51 Isaac S. and Suzanne A. Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1970), 1: 73, 76–78, 2: 739; Samuel Oppenheim, “An Early Jewish Colony in Western Guiana, 1658–1666: And Its Relation to the Jews in Suriname, Cayenne and Tobago,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 16 (1907): 95–186; Eli Faber, *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade: Setting the Record Straight* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 102; Michelle M. Terrell, *The Jewish Community of*

Merchants hailing from other British American maritime colonies, like New York and Bermuda, also were key in helping to keep Anglo-Dutch trade flourishing. Employing their prized “Bermuda Sloops,” which evolved originally from a Dutch design, Bermudians offered freight rates that were among the most competitive in the Atlantic in the eighteenth century. Relying on a thoroughly maritime community and the efficiencies their vessels offered, Bermudians served as carriers for many British colonies; it was often these traders that owned and manned the small vessels that brought sugar into St. Eustatius and carried manufactured goods away.<sup>52</sup> Likewise, New Yorkers, who benefited primarily from that city’s productive hinterland, were among the key suppliers of flour to the Dutch West Indies.<sup>53</sup>

The involvement of island traders with little political power, those from other colonies, and Jewish colonists in Anglo-Dutch trade made it easy for British officials to continue to decry the trade as they had done since the 1640s. What was new after 1700, however, was that ever greater numbers of elite West Indian planters began to join them in opposing interimperial trade. Reinforcing this new opposition was a change in the structure of the sugar business. By the 1720s the first several generations of entrepreneurial planters who had introduced and perfected sugar cultivation and who had direct experience with Dutch trade were no longer on the scene. Plantation ownership, especially in the richest colonies of Barbados, Antigua, and Nevis, had largely passed to heirs who were likely to be absentees or to London firms who had gained control of large estates during the economic boom that followed the Treaty of Utrecht (1713).<sup>54</sup> As importantly, increased competition from the French and expanding worldwide production of sugar continued to push its price downward so that the global price of sugar fell below the British price. As a result British planters began to pivot in their support for trade restrictions. Previously frustrated that these laws raised the costs of imports and restricted their ability to find the best market for sugars, planters now came to see the protected British sugar market as vital to their success. At the same time, they also began to criticize British Americans, such as those in New York, who traded to the foreign West Indies. Because American traders supplied goods to these colonies and carried away sugar and its byproducts, planters and their London

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*Early Colonial Nevis: A Historical Archaeological Study* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 51, 99–100.

52 Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 120–182.

53 Cathy Matson, *Merchants and Empire: Trading in Colonial New York* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 77–79, 134–135, 184–185.

54 Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 155–158, 172–176, 194–200.

allies argued, they were driving planters' costs upward while reducing their market for sugar. By furnishing the "*French and Dutch Sugar Settlements in the West-Indies*" with "those very Supplies, without which they could not enlarge their Plantations, as they daily do," British North Americans were undermining the British sugar trade. Hoping to forestall competition from these foreign islands British planters and their allies in London began to petition parliament to pass new legislation to end this trade.<sup>55</sup> The subsequent law, the Molasses Act (1733) was woefully inadequate in stopping trade but did signal a divergence in the way English colonists had begun to understand cross-national exchange. West Indian planters made the decision that Anglo-Dutch trade was now a threat rather than an aid to their success and thus mobilized their political power to end it.

A similar change in politics in the Chesapeake effectively finished most Anglo-Dutch trade in that region. As in the Caribbean, the several generations of early colonists with Dutch ties had mostly died by the eighteenth century and thus there were fewer residents who had first-hand experience with cross-national exchange. More importantly, though, an alliance of politically powerful London merchants and elite Virginia planters worked together to exploit the convoy system used to protect the tobacco fleet during the War of the League of Augsburg and the War of the Spanish Succession to capture much of the region's tobacco trade for themselves. One result of this process was that there was significantly less opportunity for Dutch traders and because the British naval power protected the fleets these vessels' presence in the Chesapeake further discouraged cross-national exchange.<sup>56</sup>

Anglo-Dutch trade in British America did not end abruptly in the 1730s, but it was in this decade that its meaning for British colonists largely changed.<sup>57</sup> During the remainder of the eighteenth century, trade with other empire's

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55 Thomas Tryon, *The Merchant, Citizen and Country man's Instructor: Or, a Necessary Companion for all People* (London, 1701), 221 (quotation); Richard B. Sheridan, "The Molasses Act and the Market Strategy of the British Sugar Planters," *Journal of Economic History* 17 (1957): 62–83, 64–69, 73–75; Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 61–64; Frank Wesley Pitman, *The Development of the British West Indies, 1700–1763* (1917, repr. Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1967), 190–218.

56 Bradburn, "The Visible Fist: The Chesapeake Tobacco Trade in War and the Purpose of Empire," 361–386; Enthoven and Klooster, "The Rise and Fall of the Virginia-Dutch Connection in the Seventeenth Century," in *Early Modern Virginia*, ed. Bradburn and Coomes, 114–115.

57 For continued trade see Enthoven, "That Abominable Nest of Pirates," 239–301; Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 115–117.

Caribbean colonies, especially the French, became more important to British Americans. As the economies of New York, New England, and Pennsylvania continued to expand and diversify in the eighteenth century, merchants there who were already trading with British and Dutch colonies in the Caribbean expanded their routes and more frequently called at French islands. With abundant fresh land and encouragement from their government, French planters rapidly increased their sugar cultivation. Between 1713 and 1730 the number of sugar works in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Saint-Domingue doubled. By the 1760s French planters produced more sugar than did the British. Eager to supplement what many saw as insufficient opportunities for trade in the British West Indies, New Yorkers now regularly supplied French planters with “Boards, Shingle, Joist, Plank, Hogshead-Staves, Hoops, Horses, Bread, Flower, Gammons, Salt Fish, and many other [goods of] the like.”<sup>58</sup> Whereas it had been Dutch merchants who had traded these goods to British planters desperate for supplies, British America’s own colonies were now, as one former captain noted, playing the role of “the *Dutch*” to the French colonies.<sup>59</sup> New commercial opportunities for British American traders in the French colonies did not mean an end to Anglo-Dutch trade in the Americas, but this trade was now only one (increasingly minor) part of American colonists’ broader interimperial exchange. So that, for example, when New Yorkers opposed the Molasses Act more often than not it was French, not Dutch, trade that colonists said they most hoped to preserve.<sup>60</sup> No longer would British colonists single out the Dutch as instrumental in their economic success as they had done fifty years before.

### Conclusion: Interimperial or Supranational?

British colonists’ pivot towards driving their own intercolonial trade in the eighteenth century and British planters’ (in the West Indies and Chesapeake)

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- 58 Pritchard, *In Search of Empire*, 173–186; Robert Stein, “The French Sugar Business in the Eighteenth Century: A Quantitative Study,” *Business History* 22 (1980): 3–17, 3–4, 6, 8; Sheridan, “The Molasses Act and the Market Strategy of the British Sugar Planters,” 63–64; O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 60–62; Thomas M Truxes, *Defying Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008). Robert Robertson, *A Detection of the State and Situation of the present Sugar Planters of Barbadoes and the Leeward Islands* (London, 1732), 58–59 (quotations).
- 59 Fayer Hall, *Considerations on the Bill now depending in Parliament, concerning the British sugar-colonies in America*. . . (London, 1713), 11–12.
- 60 Hall, *Considerations on the Bill now depending in Parliament*, 4; Matson, *Merchants and Empire*, 193–196, 204–205.

embrace of mercantilist policies that protected their interests reminds us that the politics of empire always mattered in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The impressive achievements of those cosmopolitan and entrepreneurial traders who built durable interimperial networks spanning the Atlantic creates the temptation to abandon nationalist frameworks in our understanding of Atlantic history. To the extent that it helps us recognize the important self-organized and cross-national origins of Atlantic empires and complicates the rise of colonial economies, this shift in thinking is productive. But if we begin to see early modern actors in the Atlantic as truly supranational and thus as belonging to a community that transcended national boundaries, we run the risk of pushing the argument too far. The use of the term “supranational,” a word that emerged in scholarly discourse between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as political thinkers strove to understand the power of proposed international political and economic bodies, suggests that individual actors in the Atlantic lived outside their national contexts and created a community beyond the authority of any one empire, and that they in turn existed independently of those empires.<sup>61</sup> While often able to function with impunity at the fringes of European empires and to unite actors across empires, interimperial networks were always entangled with empires. Undoubtedly these networks and communities shaped imperial projects and were a significant aspect of colonists’ lives, but European settlers were never able to stand beyond empire.<sup>62</sup> Oftentimes it was precisely the workings of empire – the instability imperial warfare caused and the openings for profit that mercantile restrictions created – that fostered interimperial communities during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Meanwhile, as the decision of English sugar magnates to change course and pursue greater commercial regulation in the 1730s suggests, colonial actors did not create intercolonial networks for the sake of solely building a transnational community. Rather they did so because their lived experience taught them it was the logical choice as they struggled to build successful economies at the edge of the advancing empire. Their subsequent efforts to reshape imperial policies based on their local experiences indicates their continued engagement with imperial politics. As English colonists’ petitions attest, they came to understand their economic success, even if buttressed by Dutch trade, as

61 “supranational, adj,” OED Online, June 2012 (Oxford University Press), <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/194766?redirectedFrom=supranational> (accessed 5 August 2012).

62 Nathan Perl-Rosenthal and Evan Haefeli, “Introduction: Transnational Connections,” in *Anglo-Dutch Revolutions*, ed. Perl-Rosenthal and Haefeli, special issue, *Early American Studies* 10, no. 2 (2012): 236.

productive for the British Empire as a whole. They often disagreed vehemently over the terms and character of the empire, but they supported and worked to advance it.

As we continue to trace the kinds of transnational networks that allowed economic and cultural exchange within the Atlantic we need to keep in mind developing European states and the role they played in shaping colonists' affections and behavior. One way to do this, as I have contended here, is to constantly evaluate the ways that interimperial trade shaped the make-up of Atlantic empires. This appeal to remember the imperial contexts within which colonists conducted transnational trade is not meant to suggest that interimperial networks and the cosmopolitan mindset they created were not real and did not matter. Rather it is a reminder that we also must think about how they mattered to the empires that colonies constituted. Uncovering the material contributions this trade made, how its participants understood themselves as commercial actors, and the ways it shaped imperial development are key to understanding the rise of Atlantic economies.





## SECTION 2

### *European Encounters*





# The French Atlantic and the Dutch, Late Seventeenth–Late Eighteenth Century

*Silvia Marzagalli*

Beginning in the early sixteenth century, French merchants and captains became involved in the new Atlantic trade. Private ventures, and occasionally voyages of exploration co-sponsored by the monarchy, contributed to shaping French perceptions of Atlantic opportunities and progressively influenced royal decisions regarding the direction French colonization would take. By 1650, the French crown had built an empire both on the American mainland and in the islands of the West Indies. Parallel to the rise of the French West Indies, the French established permanent trading posts both in the Indian Ocean and on the African coast to procure slaves. Although in the eighteenth century France lost parts of its empire,<sup>1</sup> both its West Indian and slave trades flourished. By the eve of the French Revolution, France was not only one of the major colonial powers, but was also the world's foremost producer of sugar and coffee.

The boundaries of the French Empire did not limit or contain all the activities of French merchants, however. In fact, French merchants looked for opportunities all over the Atlantic. They were very active, for example, in Cádiz (and thus in the Spanish American trade) and in the Levant (which increasingly imported colonial crops).<sup>2</sup> This chapter deals exclusively with French colonial trade, the leading growth sector for the country in the eighteenth

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1 Acadia and Newfoundland in 1713, New France in 1763, and Saint-Domingue/Haiti in 1804.

2 On the French merchant community in Cádiz, see Manuel Bustos Rodríguez, *Los comerciantes de la Carrera de Indias en el Cádiz del siglo XVIII (1713–1775)* (Cádiz: Universidad de Cádiz, 1995); Arnaud Bartolomei, *La Bourse et la vie. Destin collectif et trajectoires individuelles des marchands français de Cadix, de l'instauration du comercio libre à la disparition de l'empire espagnol (1778–1824)* (unpublished PhD diss., University of Provence, 2007). On the French in the Levant trade, see among others Elena Frangakis-Syrett, *The Commerce of Smyrna in the Eighteenth Century (1700–1820)* (Athens: Center for Asia Minor Studies, 1992); Daniel Panzac, *La caravane maritime: marins européens et marchands ottomans en Méditerranée (1680–1830)* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2004). For a short discussion of the French empire versus French Atlantic, see Silvia Marzagalli, “The French Atlantic World in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World, c. 1450–c. 1820*, ed. Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 235–251.

century. I will analyze the role played by Dutch merchants and the United Provinces in the emergence, consolidation and functioning of this French colonial trade in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Whereas states tried to set rules for channeling profits in order to increase the prosperity of their subjects and the territories under their control, early modern trade relied on merchant networks operating well beyond political boundaries. In looking at these networks' composition and at how they functioned, historians have considered citizenship, ethnicity, religion, or kinship as pertinent factors. But in talking about "Dutch" or "French" merchants, we should be aware that we run the risk of essentializing one element among these actors' multiple identities and thereby unduly attributing an exclusive, or at least preponderant, explanatory value to it. My sense is that merchants played with multiple identities and affiliations, depending on the nature of the economic transactions in which they were involved, and on the equally blurred identities of the partners with whom they were dealing. From the perspective of the governments involved, the question of assessing identities and affiliations was crucial because it was connected with the capacity of states to impose their sovereignty over individuals and spaces. Thus, states contributed to shaping the notion of what it meant to be a "Dutch," "French," or "British" merchant. In this sense, governments determined categories which oversimplified the reality of networks built on elements other than place of birth – elements such as confessional belonging or kinship. For example, the son of a Dutch couple born in France was defined as French by the French authorities, though he might have relatives in the United Provinces and belong to a Protestant congregation, affiliations that might influence, sometimes quite heavily, his mercantile activities. As legislation largely adopted categories determined by the state, however, they could be decisive in opening or closing the boundaries of legal trade.

The use of categories such as "Dutch," "British," or "French" applied to merchants or even to the larger oceanic space of the Atlantic is, therefore, not self-evident. We have to question how such an identity was chosen or ascribed and how it was used by the actors, especially with respect to the institutions with which they interacted, and to the legal framework in which they decided or were forced to operate. I cannot answer these questions about how merchants used their multiple identities in any detail. This would require massive empirical research into sources such as merchant and legal papers. This chapter can, at most, provide an overall picture of the main ways in which the Netherlands and the Dutch – defined here as subjects of the United Provinces – were relevant for French colonial trade. I will start by reviewing the importance of the Dutch in the initial phases of the French West Indian trade,

and show how changes induced by Colbert's policy of excluding foreign and, most especially, Dutch merchants from French colonial trade put an end to the massive direct trade of the Dutch in the French West Indies. Secondly, I will show the persistent relevance of the Dutch in the re-export trade of French colonial goods throughout the eighteenth century. Finally, I will suggest that closed colonial mercantilistic systems such as the French one could only work in the long run because of the regular recurrence of warfare, which disrupted the peacetime patterns of colonial trade. Neutral carriers such as the Dutch allowed, then, for the rebalancing of capital flows between France and the United Provinces, as well as among other nations.

### **Dutch Merchants, Ships and Capital in the Seventeenth Century French West Indian Trade**

France established permanent settlements in Canada and in the West Indies in the first half of the seventeenth century, but it was not until Colbert's ministry in the 1660s that the crown managed to make colonial trade profitable for merchants based in France. His mercantilist policy helped confirm contemporary conceptions of the usefulness of colonies. Whereas the economic utility of New France was still debatable in the seventeenth century, the French West Indies produced two profitable products: tobacco and, increasingly, sugar, once Dutch colonists introduced the techniques and know-how in the 1640s and 1650s.

By the mid-seventeenth century, merchants from Holland dominated a large part of the West Indian trade. As Wim Klooster put it, "The Dutch even managed to gain mercantile supremacy, albeit short-lived, in [...] Guadeloupe and Martinique."<sup>3</sup> This situation began to change in the 1660s. In 1662, a report presented to the minister of finance, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, estimated that of 150 ships trading with the French Caribbean, no more than three or four were French-owned. The minister spent the rest of his life trying to reverse this situation.<sup>4</sup> This led to a two-pronged strategy: firmer control by the crown on the local administration in the colonies; and the implementation of a policy for the exclusion of foreigners from the colonial trade – a policy specifically aimed at the Dutch. Colonies were put under direct state control, instead

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3 Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches. Dutch Trade in the Caribbean, 1648–1795* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1998), 89.

4 Jonathan Webster, "The Merchants of Bordeaux in Trade to the French West Indies, 1664–1717," (unpublished PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1972) 36.

of under the control of chartered companies or private landlords who had previously been granted proprietary rights (*propriétaires-seigneurs*). In 1671, foreign ships were banned from colonial ports while French exports to the colonies were exempted from all duties. Duties on French colonial imports were reduced from 5 percent to 3 percent. These decisions laid the basis for what was later labeled the “exclusive system,” a policy excluding foreigners from colonial trade and obliging the colonists to trade exclusively with the ports and merchants of the home country. French shipping and shipbuilding grew as a consequence of this policy shift.<sup>5</sup> These policies were part of a larger project meant to assert French economic interests in Europe, and was implemented via various decisions, notably the toll tariffs of 1667. It came at a cost, though. Among others, the war against the Dutch (1672–1679) resulted from it, and the permanent subordination of colonists’ interests had political consequences, but as far as the colonial trade was concerned, it proved quite effective. Similar policies were being adopted in these years by other European countries as well.

The failure of the chartered *Compagnie des Indes Occidentales* in 1666 opened up the opportunity for French merchants to ship on their own account to the colonies. Despite the almost continuous state of warfare which characterized the last 40 years of the reign of Louis XIV – wars which bought Saint-Domingue under French dominion (1697), and secured temporary access to Spanish America during the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1713) – French merchants were able to create the commercial networks that would allow them to rise to prominence in Atlantic trade in the eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup> In this process, they benefited from the assistance of pre-existing commercial networks and the capital mobilized by these networks, notably the Dutch ones. Whereas Italians dominated sixteenth-century French businesses, Flemish and Dutch merchants and bankers took over this role in the seventeenth century. Many of them had settled in the main Atlantic ports in France to

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5 Jean Tarrade, *Le commerce colonial de la France à la fin de l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972), 2 vols.

6 The War of the Spanish Succession was an important moment of capital accumulation for French merchants, which ought to be researched in greater detail. André Lespagnol has shown how merchants in Saint-Malo took advantage of different opportunities, whereas Christian Huetz de Lemps pointed to the emergence of a new class of shipowners, without being able to provide an exact account of how they made a fortune. André Lespagnol, *Messieurs de Saint-Malo. Une élite négociante au temps de Louis XIV* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2nd ed., 1996); Christian Huetz de Lemps, *Géographie du commerce de Bordeaux à la fin du règne de Louis XIV* (Paris: Mouton, 1975). For the other major trading centers which emerged as colonial ports, we lack precise information.

control the salt, wine and other export trades. They were, therefore, well-positioned to take advantage of the emergence of French colonial trade.

From the beginning, La Rochelle participated intensively in the West Indian trade, whereas Nantes specialized in the slave trade. Bordeaux's shipowners also converted their businesses to the colonial trade – successfully competing with the aforementioned Atlantic ports – which proved more profitable than the Newfoundland fisheries. As Bordeaux was to become the most important French port for colonial trade, its case deserves closer attention. By the 1660s, a few wealthy French merchants in Bordeaux fitted out expeditions to both Newfoundland and to the West Indies. Some of these merchants were Catholic, like François Saige and Pierre Cornut; others were Huguenots, like Etienne Dhariette, who fitted out the first known expedition from Bordeaux to Quebec in 1671, as well as the first triangular shipping venture from Bordeaux to Quebec and to the West Indies in 1672.<sup>7</sup> For the latter voyage, Dhariette freighted the ship of his Catholic colleague, Saige. Whether Catholic or Protestant-owned, most of the funds for these Newfoundland ventures were obtained through bottomry loans granted by a naturalized Dutch merchant living in Bordeaux, Jean de Ridder, and his brother-in-law, the British wine merchant Thomas Arundell. Between 1660 and his death in 1671, Ridder financed 86 bottomry loans in Bordeaux for expeditions to the Newfoundland fisheries, often in partnership with Everhard Jabach, a banker who settled in Paris, who was also director of the French East Indian Company.<sup>8</sup> Ridder also financed and insured the first Bordeaux ventures to the West Indies.<sup>9</sup> This group of wealthy merchants was also the originator of Bordeaux's increasing involvement in the West Indian trade, which developed from the 1660s onwards. By 1685, Bordeaux fitted out 50 ships to the West Indies. Huguenot merchant Etienne Dhariette participated, alone or in partnership with other merchants, in a quarter of the

7 Bertrand Gautier mentions a venture in 1632 from Bordeaux to Canada, but finds no evidence of other ventures in 1630–1635 and 1645–1650. Bertrand Gautier, *Contribution à l'histoire de l'économie maritime et de la société marchande à Bordeaux dans la première moitié du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: 1630–1650* (unpublished PhD diss., University of Bordeaux III, 1987–1988).

8 Peter Voss, "L'exemple d'un 'bourgeois et marchand de Bordeaux' au milieu du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle [Jean de Ridder]," *Bulletin du Centre d'Histoire des Espaces Atlantiques*, 4 (1988): 73–109. Webster, *Merchants*. Jabach's father had made a fortune as banker in Antwerp, before settling back in Cologne and converting to Catholicism in order to be accepted in the local Senate. See Vicomte de Grouchy, "Everhard Jabach, collectionneur parisien," *Mémoires de la société d'histoire de Paris et de l'Île de France*, 21 (Paris: H. Champion, 1894), 217–248.

9 Peter Voss has found evidence, between 1654 and 1671, of a total of 239 bottomry loans and 241 insurance contracts granted by de Ridder. A quarter of them were granted to Bordeaux ship-owners, who were able to consistently increase their fleet in those years. Voss, "L'exemple."



343 voyages sent out from Bordeaux to the West Indies from the 1660s until 1685.<sup>10</sup> Although it is difficult to generalize in the absence of detailed research on the specific contribution of Dutch capital in the rise of colonial shipping in other French ports, this case supports the widespread contemporary perception of the trade supremacy of the Dutch in the second half of the seventeenth century.

Whereas Dutch capital and insurance services were decisive for the West Indian trade in this phase, within a generation French merchants in Bordeaux were able to send expeditions to the West Indies using their own financial resources. A similar evolution toward autonomy in financing long-distance trade has been observed in Marseille.<sup>11</sup> This might have been the result of the high returns upon investment of these expeditions, on the one hand, and of the implementation of French colonial policy aimed at excluding foreigners from its colonial trade on the other. Foreign participation, however, continued to be of great importance in Bordeaux, as it was in other major French ports. Northern Europeans remained in charge of most of France's European import and export trade, and the United Provinces was a vital market for French colonial re-exports throughout the eighteenth century.

### The Dutch and the Re-export of French Colonial Goods

Whereas Dutch merchants initiated sugar production in the French West Indies, carried on most of its colonial trade in the mid-seventeenth century, and financed the first French expeditions to the West Indies beginning in the 1660s, colonial shipping and trade was largely taken over in the eighteenth century by French businesses funded by French capital. Although firms involved in French colonial trade could occasionally include naturalized merchants and descendants of foreigners born in France – who were considered by the French authorities as French subjects – French merchants nonetheless dominated this protected market.<sup>12</sup>

10 Webster, *Merchants*, 125–160. Silvia Marzagalli, “Le négoce bordelais et ses hommes,” in *Histoire des Bordelais. La modernité triomphante (1715–1815)*, 2 vols., ed. Michel Figeac (Bordeaux: Mollat/Fédération Historique du Sud-Ouest, 2002), 1:85–115.

11 Paul Butel, *Les négociants bordelais, l'Europe et les Iles au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1974); Charles Carrière, *Négociants marseillais au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Marseille: Institut historique de Provence, 1973).

12 On the legal status of foreigners in France, see Silvia Marzagalli, “L'évolution de la politique française vis-à-vis des étrangers à l'époque moderne: conditions, discours,

Within a few decades after Spain's official recognition of French sovereignty over Saint-Domingue (1697), the French part of the island became the world's major sugar and coffee producer. Increasing quantities of colonial goods were, therefore, shipped to France, where four ports (Bordeaux, Nantes, Marseille and Le Havre/Rouen) monopolized 90 percent of colonial trade.<sup>13</sup>

National consumption of colonial goods, however, was comparatively low, although France, with its 24 million inhabitants in 1750 and 28 million in 1789, was by far the most populated country in Europe. Despite French cities shifting to new consumption patterns directly linked to imports from the Americas (coffee, tobacco, textiles colored with indigo, mahogany furniture, etc.), France re-exported 80 percent of its colonial imports to other European countries as well as to the Levant. This was due to the fact that the capacity of the national market was limited by low incomes and high inland transport costs. The main markets were in Northern Europe, and the Dutch played an important role in the redistribution of colonial goods imported to French ports in accordance with dictates of the mercantilist system. Colonial goods found their way to their final markets on foreign ships, as a natural extension of the traditional role played by foreigners in the overall import and export trade with France.<sup>14</sup>

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pratiques," in *Les étrangers dans les villes-ports atlantiques (XV<sup>e</sup>–XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle)*. *Expériences allemandes et françaises*, ed. Mickaël Augeron and Pascal Even (Paris: Les Indes savantes, 2010), 45–62.

- 13 On French colonial trade and its legal framework, see Tarrade, *Le commerce colonial*.
- 14 In most of the seventeenth century French Atlantic ports, the export of "traditional" products (wine, salt, cereals) was dominated by foreign interests – and most significantly the Dutch – who had commission merchants in most of these French ports. French merchants were generally in charge of the local trades, or acted as commission merchants, without investing in shipping and the export trade on their own account. For Nantes, see Jean Meyer, *L'armement nantais dans la deuxième moitié du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Sevpen, 1969); for Saint-Malo, Lespagnol, *Messieurs de Saint-Malo*, 273. For the Dutch trade in French wine, see Henriette de Bruyn Kops, *A spirited exchange: the wine and brandy trade between France and the Dutch Republic in its Atlantic framework, 1600–1650* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2007) and Anne Wegener Sleeswijk, *Les vins français aux Provinces-unies au 18<sup>e</sup> siècle: négoce, dynamique institutionnelle et la restructuration du marché// Franse wijn in de republiek in de 18<sup>e</sup> eeuw: economisch handelen, institutionele dynamiek en de herstructurering van de markt* (unpublished PhD diss., EHESS and the University of Amsterdam, 2006), 3 vols. Competition occasionally led to conflicts, like in Nantes, where demonstrations against Portuguese New Christians (1636–1637) and the Dutch (1640) took place. See Guy Saupin, *Nantes au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: vie politique et société urbaine* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1996), 247–249.

Using the data we have entered into the online Navigocorpus database,<sup>15</sup> we can provide a global overview of the presence of Dutch ships in France in 1787. Data have been collected for all available clearances (i.e. for a total of 98 French ports, encompassing 80 percent of all clearances in the Channel and Atlantic ports, but only 3 percent of Mediterranean ports). In order to compensate for the absence of equivalent sources on the clearances for French Mediterranean ports, we have also entered into the database all entries from the Health Office data in Marseille (corresponding to 32 percent of all Mediterranean clearances. These entries, however, do cover 80 percent of all non-Spanish foreign ship movements in the French Mediterranean ports).<sup>16</sup> Without being exhaustive, available data for 1787 offer a quite accurate picture of Dutch shipping in France.

The database provides information on 828 Dutch entries or clearances in France, representing a total of 582 different ships. Their tonnage, as far as the information provided in the clearances reveals, is shown in Figure 4.1. We do not have any data on the tonnage of the 33 Dutch ships entering Marseille that year.

Out of 32 different recorded French ports which were frequented by Dutch ships in 1787, information on the main exported item(s) in the cargo is provided for 18 ports only, among which was Bordeaux,<sup>17</sup> but not for the three other main colonial ports. Sugar was on board 105 ships, coffee on 18 additional ships (in 40 instances, coffee is mentioned together

15 On Navigocorpus, see <http://navigocorpus.org/> and <http://navigocorpus.hypotheses.org/>. For a description of the database, see Jean-Pierre Dedieu, et al., "Navigocorpus, a database for shipping information. A methodological and technical introduction," *International Journal of Maritime History* 33, no. 2 (2011): 241–262, and id., "Navigocorpus at work. A brief overview of the potentialities of a database," *International Journal of Maritime History* 24, no. 1 (2012): 331–359.

16 Spanish ships were exempted from some duties, which affects the statistics. A comparison with other statistics shows that between 75 percent and 85 percent of total foreign shipping in Provence was concentrated in Marseille. Ports in the Languedoc (notably Sète) had a total of foreign shipping (Spanish shipping excluded) which, between 1774 and 1790, represented about 15 percent of the corresponding figures for ports in the Provence. Roussillon had hardly any foreign, non-Spanish shipping. See Christian Pfister-Langanay and Silvia Marzagalli, "La navigation des ports français en Méditerranée au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: premiers aperçus à partir d'une source inexploitée," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 83 (2011): 273–295.

17 With 16 percent of the known Dutch clearances from France and 26 percent of the total known Dutch tonnage, Bordeaux had 74 of the 121 known Dutch ships exporting French colonial goods.

with sugar). As Figure 4.2 shows, the United Provinces was by far the main destination of these ships.

In Bordeaux, 88 of the 338 ships exporting sugar or coffee abroad in 1787 (26 percent) were Dutch. Figure 4.3 shows the flags and destinations of these ships. As these figures show, most of the Dutch shipping in French colonial goods was bound for the United Provinces, although a part of it was subsequently re-exported to other areas. As far as the Baltic trade is concerned, the online Sound Toll Register provides a complementary picture. A total of 484 ships passed the Sound coming from a French port and bound for the Baltic in 1787.<sup>18</sup> Sixty-eight of them had a captain who declared himself to be living in the United Provinces (14 percent). All of these Dutch ships cleared from a French Atlantic port. Twenty-two of them declared either sugar or coffee on board (nine of which also had indigo as cargo), whereas the French sources in Navigocorpus allowed for the identification of only nine ships bound for the Baltic with colonial goods. Differences with the data contained in Navigocorpus are due to the fact that cargoes are described in much more detail in the Sound Toll registers than in French clearance registers. Moreover, Dutch captains clearing from a French port might have declared a Dutch destination, when they eventually made a stop before crossing the Sound. All but three of these ships entering the Baltic came from Bordeaux. The others cleared from Nantes. With 22 ships out of a total of 158 ships entering the Baltic from a French

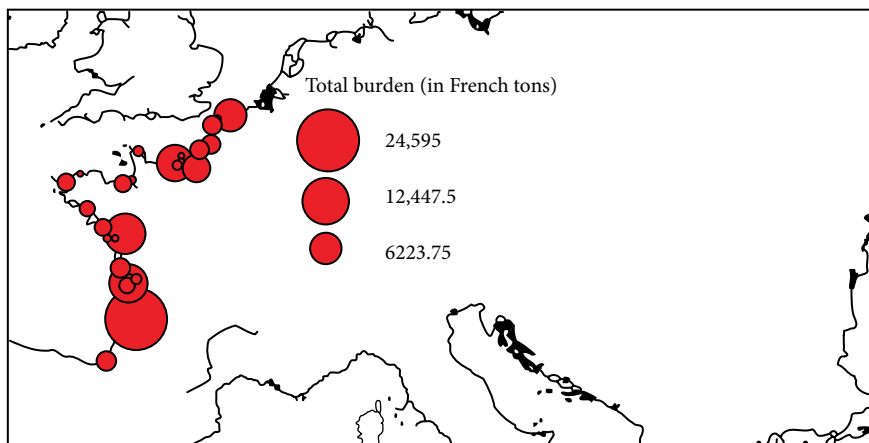


FIGURE 4.1 *Total tonnage of Dutch ships clearing French ports in 1787.*

SOURCE: NAVIGOCORPUS DATABASE. [HTTP://NAVIGOCORPUS.ORG/](http://navigocorpus.org/).

18 Two of them in the first week of January 1787, thus with a departure from the French port in 1786.

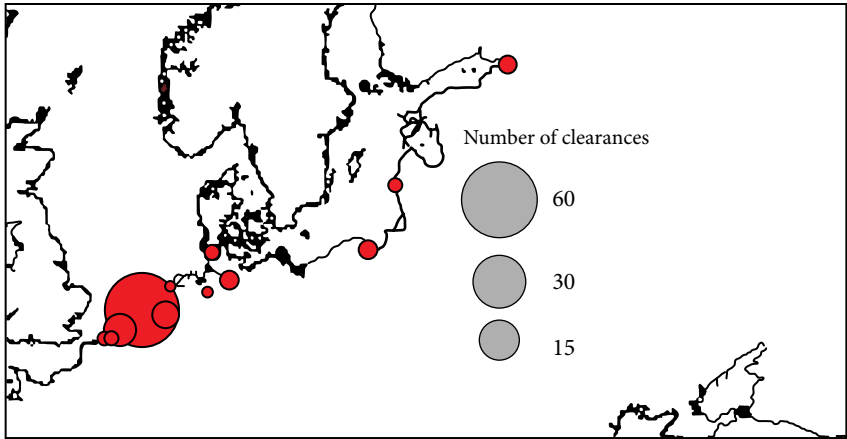


FIGURE 4.2 *Destination of Dutch ships clearing French Atlantic ports with sugar or coffee on board, 1787.*  
SOURCE: NAVIGOCORPUS DATABASE, DATA FROM 18 FRENCH ATLANTIC PORTS.  
[HTTP://NAVIGOCORPUS.ORG/](http://navigocorpus.org/).

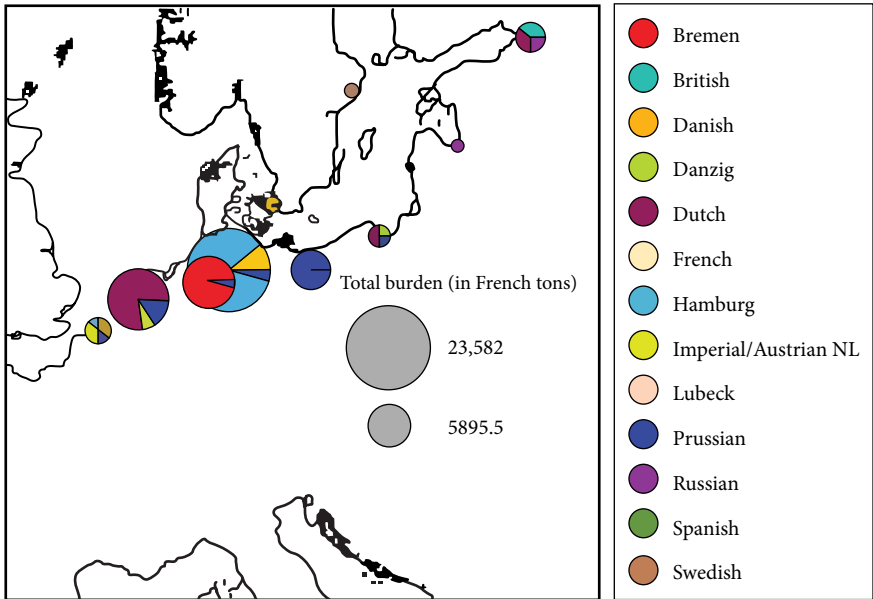


FIGURE 4.3 *Total tonnage of the ships clearing Bordeaux with sugar or coffee in 1787, per destination and flag.*  
SOURCE: NAVIGOCORPUS DATABASE. [HTTP://NAVIGOCORPUS.ORG/](http://navigocorpus.org/).

Atlantic port with either sugar or coffee on board, the Dutch owned 14 percent of the ships which carried French colonial re-export trade to this area.<sup>19</sup>

This data about 1787 reflects the situation after at least four decades of relative decline in the position held by Dutch shipping in French import and export markets. From his analysis of Bordeaux, Paul Butel showed that Dutch ships represented 65 percent of total foreign tonnage in Bordeaux in 1715, 44 percent in 1746, 29 percent in 1773 and 18 percent in 1787.<sup>20</sup> Despite this decline, which is consistent with the general trend in the relative position of the Dutch in the international transport markets, these data show that the Dutch still played a significant role in the re-export trade of French colonial goods at the end of the *ancien régime*, given the fact that colonial trade had increased impressively in the eighteenth century. The position of the Dutch in the re-export markets for French colonial goods, notably in Bordeaux, was still important on the eve of the French Revolution, even if their growth rate was slower than that of other Northern Europeans.<sup>21</sup> This achievement relied on solid merchant networks which did not require an overly large presence of Dutch middlemen in France. As a matter of fact, the Dutch were only a small community in most major French ports.<sup>22</sup>

### The Role of Dutch Neutrality and the Necessity of Warfare

The trade relations we have discussed so far concerns peacetime. During peace, the mercantilist system worked at its best, and West Indian products found their way to European consumers through a French port and the concomitant re-export trade. War, however, disrupted peacetime colonial trade

19 All the data on the Sound Toll have been extracted from the Sound Toll Online Database <http://www.soundtoll.nl> (consulted 5 August 2012).

20 Paul Butel, *Les négociants bordelais*, 53.

21 Using the balances of trade, Butel provides some figures of this relative decline both for Bordeaux and for France: Butel, *Les négociants bordelais*, 52–67.

22 For Bordeaux, Voss showed that the Dutch were already outnumbered by Hanseatic merchants by 1715. See Peter Voss, “Une communauté sur le déclin? Les marchands hollandais à Bordeaux, 1650–1715,” *Bulletin du Centre d'Histoire des Espaces Atlantiques* 7 (1995): 33–57. In Marseille, Carrière has identified a total of 22 merchants from the United Provinces and from the Austrian Netherlands between 1715 and 1789. This equaled 22 out of the total of 489 foreigners, which was less than 5 percent. Dutch ships represented almost 12 percent of the total foreign entrances in Marseille. Carrière, *Négociants marseillais*, 1: 273, 584.

and the *système exclusif*. Chased by the British navy and enemy privateers, French ships were no longer able to supply colonists with goods and slaves, nor could they safely carry colonial goods to France. More generally, trade under the French flag during a conflict was dangerous, and this resulted in taking recourse to neutral carriers, among which the Dutch were well-positioned during most of the eighteenth-century conflicts. The Dutch, in fact, consistently carried a portion of the shipping in French metropolitan ports. During the War of the Spanish Succession, France issued, for instance, over 4000 passes to Dutch captains.<sup>23</sup> In order to take part in the colonial trade, merchants and colonists also organized alternative trade routes, and made use of neutral ports. In 1780, for instance, Bordeaux merchant Gradis supplied his plantations in Martinique and Saint-Domingue through St. Eustatius, from which he also dispatched his sugar to London, Amsterdam, and Rotterdam.<sup>24</sup> In some instances, such as in 1793, French colonial ports were opened to foreign neutral ships.

Without exploring the role played by Dutch ships and the Dutch colonies in the Americas in warfare any further – not to mention the endemic smuggling which went on even in peacetime with other imperial systems<sup>25</sup> – I would instead like to develop some more general reflections on the role played by warfare and neutrality and how these impacted the way Atlantic trade worked.<sup>26</sup>

Warfare is often considered an exogenous element disrupting the regular course of transatlantic trade. There are at least two reasons which lead me to believe that we should rethink this picture. The first reason is that warfare was just as frequent as peace, and there is no particular reason why we should consider that the latter represents the norm, and that warfare was an exception. Neither was warfare exogenous to the Atlantic system. European empires

23 John S. Bromley, "Le commerce de la France de l'ouest et la guerre maritime," *Annales du Midi* 65 (1953): 49–66 (cited by Carrière, *Négociants marseillais* 1973, 1:498).

24 Paul Butel, *La croissance commerciale bordelaise dans la seconde moitié du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (thèse d'Etat, Lille, Service de reproduction des thèses, 2 vols., 1973), 146–147.

25 See Klooster, *Illicit Riches*, chapter 5; Christian Schnakenbourg, *Les sucreries de la Guadeloupe dans la seconde moitié du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (1760–1790): contribution à l'étude de la crise de l'économie coloniale à la fin de l'ancien régime* (Thèse d'Etat, Université de Paris II, 1972).

26 I have developed the argument I suggest in this section with more details in a chapter entitled "Is warfare necessary to the functioning 18th century colonial systems? Some reflections on the necessity of cross-imperial and foreign trade in the French case," in *Beyond Empires: Self-Organizing Cross-Imperial Economic Networks versus Institutional Empires, 1500–1800*, ed. Catia Antunes and Amelia Polonia, forthcoming.

in the Americas generated tensions, as states tried to keep their colonies closed to foreigners while, at the same time, trying to penetrate the colonial markets of other European empires. Imperial struggles to take over parts of colonial markets regularly generated warfare. Violence and wars can thus be seen as intrinsic elements of the colonial empires of the early modern European powers.

The second reason why I believe we should try to include war in the narrative of colonial trade is based upon economic considerations. Michel Morineau noticed that in 1788 the United Provinces imported from France twice the value of their exports to France.<sup>27</sup> The imbalance was even greater for other Northern European territories, notably for the Hanseatic towns. Morineau suggested that some mechanisms of compensation were necessarily at work, making it possible for the Northern Europeans to withstand a structural imbalance in the long run. Besides insurance and shares in French trade, Morineau pointed to war as the major factor in reestablishing the balance, as international conflicts provoked an increased recourse to neutral shipping on the one hand, and consistent French war expenditures abroad on the other.<sup>28</sup> In an Atlantic perspective, warfare could be considered an element which was necessary to equalize imbalances in trade which were generated by the existence of closed imperial systems – systems which obliged colonists to trade exclusively (or mainly<sup>29</sup>) with the home country. Morineau's interpretation is particularly interesting because it views warfare as a part of a system, and not as an exogenous element interfering with an otherwise progressive exponential growth of trade, as most of French historians have interpreted France eighteenth-century trade.<sup>30</sup> Smuggling and interimperial trade might have

27 Michel Morineau, "La vraie nature des choses et leur enchaînement entre la France, les Antilles et l'Europe (XVII<sup>e</sup>–XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle)," *Revue française d'histoire d'Outre-Mer* 84, no. 314 (1997): 3–24, 15–19.

28 Morineau, "La vraie nature," 18.

29 In the British case, a limited trade in non-enumerated goods with extra-imperial countries was authorized. For the role played by Southern Europe in the balance of trade of the thirteen North American British colonies before 1776, see John McCusker, "Worth a War? The Importance of the Trade between British America and the Mediterranean," *Research in Maritime History* 44 (2010): 7–24. See also James G. Lydon, "Fish and Flour for Gold: Southern Europe and the Colonial American Balance of Payments," *Business History Review* 39 (1965): 171–183.

30 On the traditional interpretations of French eighteenth-century colonial trade and the impact of the Revolution on it, including a possible alternative interpretative framework, see Silvia Marzagalli, "Le négoce maritime et la rupture révolutionnaire: un ancien débat revisité," *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 352, no. 2 (2008): 183–207.



played an analogous role in peacetime by providing a balance in an international system of exchange. More globally, compensation mechanisms could follow complex patterns of multilateral relations, including both colonial and international trade.<sup>31</sup> This is not to say that such processes were consciously put into being by precise identifiable actors. Rather, I am suggesting that the system based on theoretically closed imperial systems could last for over a century because of its structural leaks (smuggling) and because of readjustments of imbalances caused by warfare.

The French colonial and re-export trade allowed France to compensate for trade imbalances with Great Britain, Central Europe and Asia in peacetime. By imposing limitations on colonial trade and forcing it to pass through French ports, however, the mercantilist system generated other imbalances (notably between France and Northern Europe). Warfare might have served as an overall adjustment variable which contributed frequently enough to recalibrate the system, especially given the fact that these Northern European countries were generally neutral and took advantage of warfare to increase their trade and shipping substantially. In this sense, the policy of neutrality adopted by the United Provinces during most of eighteenth-century conflicts was crucial, and its case is comparable to the Hanseatic city of Hamburg. Conflicts, however, also led to the progressive loss of France's first colonial empire (1713, 1763, 1804, 1815), thus emphasizing a further element of its fragility. Other elements were increasing colonial debts, decreasing profit margins, and the deportation of an increasing number of captives, which meant that on the eve of the Haitian Revolution the majority of slaves in Saint-Domingue were born in Africa, and, therefore, less integrated into the colonial society than were West-Indian born slaves.

## Conclusion

This chapter analyzed a few ways in which the Dutch played a role in the emergence and viability of French colonial trade from the second part of the seventeenth century up to the French Revolution. This role evolved over time.

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31 On this point, as far as the Dutch and British trade in the Baltic is concerned, see Karin Newman, "Anglo-Dutch Commercial Co-operation and the Russia Trade in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Interactions of Amsterdam and Antwerp with the Baltic region, 1400–1800*, ed. W.J. Wieringa (Leiden: M. Nijhoff, 1983), 95–103. On the role of Amsterdam for the English payments for their Baltic trade, see also Artur Attman, "English trade balances in the Baltic during the eighteenth century," in *Britain and the Northern Seas: some essays* (Proceedings of the 4th Conference of the Association for the History of the Northern Seas), ed. Walter Minchinton (Pontefract: Lofthouse, 1985), 43–52, esp. 45.

Whereas Dutch capital proved essential for the rise of French-based shipping to the West Indies, the Dutch were thereafter essential mainly for organizing a flourishing re-export trade of colonial goods from the French ports to the United Provinces on Dutch ships. The exclusion of the Dutch from direct trade to French America was less effective in wartime, when French colonies might be opened up to neutral trade. More significantly, the exclusive colonial system created by France was viable in the long run only if some mechanisms compensated for the structural imbalance of trade it generated. The United Provinces is a case in point – although not the only one – to test the hypothesis that war played a central role. I did not aim to be exhaustive in any of my considerations of these elements. Further research is badly needed. Nor could I examine all possible aspects of the questions I raised. Some of them have been neglected, such as the role played by Amsterdam as a major international financial center for remittances and payments and as an insurance market for shipping, which was essential in enabling international trade and shipping.

The aim of this chapter was to present a case study. Atlantic imperial systems – taking for granted that they existed – cannot be studied as atomized, disconnected entities. To understand the way they worked we must adopt a systemic approach. In order to stress this point here, I have deliberately and artificially constrained the “French Atlantic” within the framework of the French colonial mercantilist system, without even examining its leaks and constant compromises at the local, colonial level. Nor have I discussed the way French merchants profited on the margins of it, while at the same time they lobbied for the maintenance of protective legislation.<sup>32</sup> The point I make is that French colonial trade originated, flourished and persisted only through the collaboration of non-French merchants and the existence of non-French markets, among which the Dutch and the United Provinces were a vital

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32 I am referring for instance to the attitude of French merchants toward the United States market after the independence: while they complained bitterly for the moderate opening of the French West Indies to North American ships, they also fitted out their own ships to the United States and the West Indies to optimize profit opportunities in such triangular ventures. Gaston Martin, “Commercial relations between Nantes and the American Colonies during the War of Independence,” *Journal of Economic and Business History* 4 (1931–1932): 815–820; see also Silvia Marzagalli, *Bordeaux et les États-Unis, 1776–1815: politique et stratégies négociantes dans la genèse d'un réseau commercial* (Geneva: Droz, 2014), chapter 2. On the attitude of French merchants and industrialists toward the French state, see Jean-Pierre Hirsch, *Les deux rêves du commerce. Entreprise et institution dans la région lilloise (1780–1860)* (Paris: EHESS, 1991); Jean-Pierre Hirsch and Philippe Minard, “Laissons nous faire et protégez-nous beaucoup: pour une histoire des pratiques institutionnelles dans l'industrie française,” in *La France n'est-elle pas douée pour l'industrie?*, ed. Louis Bergeron and Patrice Bourdelais (Paris: Belin, 1998), 135–158.

element, but certainly not the only one, and actually no longer the most dynamic as time passed. In order to move beyond this general picture, we need to investigate far more sources, including the private papers of merchants and the records left in notarial archives. Only then can we shed new light on the fascinating historiographical questions about neutrality, trans-imperial trade, and constantly reconfigured merchant networks.

# Anglo-Dutch Economic Relations in the Atlantic World, 1688–1783

*Kenneth Morgan*

Between the Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution, Britain and the Netherlands had significant economic connections that affected the Atlantic trade of both countries. Anglo-Dutch economic relations had their foundations in various factors. Anglo-Dutch trade had flourished from the Middle Ages onwards. London and Amsterdam were the major financial capitals of Europe, with considerable interaction among them. The English and the Dutch were natural allies as maritime powers between 1674, the end of the Third Anglo-Dutch War, and 1780, when after a century of almost complete neutrality in major wars, Britain and Holland became embroiled in conflict during the American Revolutionary War. In the period covered in this paper, harmonious relations between Britain and the Netherlands were embedded in formal treaties dated 1674, 1675 and 1678.<sup>1</sup> Anglo-Dutch involvement in colonial affairs antedated that time: Dutch merchants had carried out extensive commerce with Virginia in the mid-seventeenth century and the Dutch community's commercial activities in New Netherland continued after England captured that colony in 1664 and renamed it New York. The Dutch connection with Virginia declined in the 1690s but Dutch economic and cultural influence in New York continued well into the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Anglo-Dutch economic

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- 1 Alice Clare Carter, *Neutrality or Commitment. The Evolution of Dutch Foreign Policy, 1667–1795* (London: Edward Arnold, 1975); Hugh Dunthorne, *The Maritime Powers, 1721–1740: A Study of Anglo-Dutch Relations in the Age of Walpole* (New York: Garland, 1986).
  - 2 Victor Enthoven, “Going Dutch. Interloping in the Dutch Atlantic World” in *Small is Beautiful? Interlopers and Smaller Trading Nations in the Pre-Industrial Period*, Proceedings of the XVth World Economic History Congress in Utrecht (Netherlands) 2009, ed. Markus A. Denzel, Jan de Vries, and Philipp Robinson Rössner (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2011), 21–48, 28–29, 31; Christian J. Koot, *Empire at the Periphery: British Colonists, Anglo-Dutch Trade, and the Development of the British Atlantic, 1621–1713* (New York: New York University Press, 2011) and “The Dutch and the Making of the British Atlantic, 1621–1733,” in this volume; Victor Enthoven and Wim Klooster, “The Rise and Fall of the Virginia-Dutch Connection in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Early Modern Virginia: Reconsidering the Old Dominion*, ed. Douglas Bradburn and John C. Combs (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 90–127; Wim Klooster, “Anglo-Dutch Trade in the Seventeenth Century: An Atlantic Partnership?” in *Shaping the Stuart World, 1603–1714: The Atlantic Connection*, ed. Allan I. Macinnes and Arthur H. Williamson (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 261–284.

relations were also influenced by the restructuring of Dutch capital input into the long-established Anglo-European trades in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This helped to facilitate British expansion in transatlantic trade in the same period by allowing British merchants to undertake a substantial range of commission trades with colonies.<sup>3</sup>

Britain had a much larger stake in the Americas than the Netherlands and France, the two other main European powers in the North Atlantic trading world. By 1775 British America covered 467,836 square miles with a population of 3.1 million; the Dutch empire in the Americas comprised 146,466 square miles with less than 0.2 million settlers; and the French empire in the Americas consisted of 45,339 square miles with a population of almost 0.5 million.<sup>4</sup> Whereas Britain could always count on numerous emigrants to destinations across the Atlantic and military-fiscal support for her colonies, the Dutch lacked significant numbers of out-migrants and sufficient military and naval support to protect colonies from the incursions of rival powers.<sup>5</sup> Between 1688 and 1783 Britain and the Netherlands had no rivalry for territory in the Americas whereas competition between Britain and France for command of the ocean and overseas territories led to frequent wars.

This chapter analyzes Anglo-Dutch economic relations between the Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution to highlight the interaction of Britain and the Netherlands in the burgeoning Atlantic trading world of that period. The essay is divided into two sections. The first section considers the Dutch financial contribution to British public credit as the foundation of maintaining safety in the Atlantic against French rivalry. As we will see, Britain had the financial and administrative means, coupled with naval power, to weather the slings and arrows of regular wartime disruption. The financial, administrative and naval support offered by the state was necessary for the success of British trade and expansion in the Atlantic world. The protective framework of the Navigation Acts and the fiscal-military strength of the British state were especially important in this regard. This chapter shows that the Dutch contributed financially to the strength of public credit in Britain and thereby assisted

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3 David Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires: England and the Netherlands in the Age of Mercantilism, 1650–1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 65, 333, 342.

4 Calculated from data in Carole Shammas, "The revolutionary impact of European demand for tropical goods," in *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy*, ed. Kenneth Morgan and John J. McCusker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 163–185, 184–185. Native Americans are excluded from the population totals.

5 P.C. Emmer, "Jesus Christ was Good, but Trade was Better": An Overview of the Transit Trade of the Dutch Antilles, 1634–1795," in *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion*, ed. Robert L. Paquette and Stanley L. Engerman (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1996), 206–208.

in the British attempt to stave off the rivalry of the French in the eighteenth-century Atlantic trading world.

The second section discusses Anglo-Dutch economic relations in the eighteenth-century Atlantic. Britain pursued mercantilist policies initially created to combat Dutch commercial rivalry. It might seem that such acts of trade would limit Anglo-Dutch economic relations in the Atlantic trading world simply because the laws were intended to restrict trade to the benefit of the mother country. But such restrictions were not the whole story. Anglo-Dutch economic relations flourished within the Atlantic sphere of trade in several ways. First, within the parameters of the English Navigation Acts, there was legitimate scope for Anglo-Dutch connections in relation to English re-exports of colonial staple produce from London and Glasgow to Amsterdam and Rotterdam. This turned out to be an important branch of trade for both Britain and the Netherlands. Second, despite the English takeover of New Netherland, the merchants of New York continued to have an important Dutch component until at least the American War of Independence. This meant that trade between New York and other English territories, especially in the Caribbean, had a significant Dutch influence between 1689 and 1776. Third, the important role played by two tiny Dutch Caribbean islands – Curaçao and St. Eustatius – as transit points for the international exchange of goods served Anglo-Dutch economic relations in a mutually beneficial way. Fourth, Dutch smuggling to North America, in defiance of mercantilist restrictions, demonstrated the links between Dutch and Anglophone merchants as part of the Atlantic trading system. Fifth, Bermuda's merchants and mariners found a significant outlet for their maritime activities through commercial contacts with Dutch Caribbean islands. Together, as this chapter shows, a series of mutually beneficial overlapping commercial connections, partly licit, and partly illicit, linked Anglophone and Dutch-speaking traders in North America and the Caribbean in the period between 1688 and 1783. The analysis underscores the importance of considering Anglo-Dutch commercial connections in the Atlantic both within and beyond national jurisdictions.

## I

Protectionism, coupled with a powerful navy, a strong state, and the funding to prosecute war, became part of the “inseparable connections” that combined to forge Britain's rise to global power over the course of the eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

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6 For the interrelated nature of these factors, see Patrick O'Brien, “Inseparable Connections: Trade, Economy, Fiscal State, and the Expansion of Empire, 1688–1815,” in *The Oxford History*

Protection afforded by the Navigation Acts and the Royal navy was an essential feature of the pursuit of mercantilist objectives. The five Navigation Acts implemented between 1651 and 1696, and the three Anglo-Dutch Wars of 1652–1654, 1665–1667 and 1672–1674, eliminated the Dutch from much of the carrying trade and ensured that Amsterdam did not become a greater trading entrepôt than London. The Act of 1660, for instance, stipulated that all commodities taken to and from the colonies should be carried in English or colonial ships, and that masters and three-quarters of the crew were to be English or colonial subjects. The act was intended to oust the Dutch from trade with Virginia. The Acts of Trade continued throughout the eighteenth century. The only major changes to them were the inclusion of Scotland within the free trade area after the creation of Great Britain in 1707 and the exclusion of the North American colonies after they declared independence in 1776. Ireland, regarded as a rival to English trade and navigation, was excluded from operating under the navigation system except for the trades in linen, provisions and servants.<sup>7</sup>

The Navigation Acts were reinforced by fiscal policies that gave colonists considerable preference in the British domestic market through heavy duties on foreign products, such as tobacco and sugar, entering Britain. This contrasted with the Dutch situation in which protection was not granted to products shipped from the Americas.<sup>8</sup> By 1750 the Navigation Acts had effectively restricted Dutch commercial activities in the Atlantic and Britain's extra-European trade was much larger than that of the Dutch.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Britain had the resources to ensure that its shipping and trade was backed up by strong naval power. Between 1689 and 1763 annual investment in the army and navy nearly always accounted for two-thirds of government

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*of the British Empire. Volume 2: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. P.J. Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 53–77.

- 7 Kenneth Morgan, "Mercantilism and the British Empire, 1688–1815," in *The Political Economy of British Historical Experience 1688–1914*, ed. Donald Winch and Patrick K. O'Brien (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 165–191.
- 8 John J. McCusker, "British Mercantilist Policies and the American Colonies" in *The Cambridge Economic History of the United States, 3 vols., 1: The Colonial Era*, ed. Stanley L. Engerman and Robert E. Gallman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 337–362; Patrick O'Brien, "Mercantilism and Imperialism in the Rise and Decline of the Dutch and British Economies, 1585–1815," *De Economist* 148 (2000): 459–501, 483–484.
- 9 Niels Steensgaard, "The Growth and Composition of the Long-Distance Trade of England and the Dutch Republic before 1750," in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World 1350–1750*, ed. James D. Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 102–152.

expenditure.<sup>10</sup> Investment in the Royal navy (operating at much higher levels than funds poured into the army) enabled Britain to establish dominance in European waters during the eighteenth century and thereby support overseas operations.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, trade also occurred between different national flags beyond the confines of the Acts of Trade, whether legally or illegally. The best-informed estimates of the scale of this commerce suggest that it was significant in value. Thus Robert Dinwiddie's reports of 1743 and 1748 both reckoned that the trade from colonies in British North America and the West Indies to foreign possessions held by the Spanish, French and Dutch amounted annually to £1,115,000.<sup>12</sup> It is not known what proportion of this commerce comprised smuggling, but the extent of illegal trade in the Caribbean was extensive and involved every colony in the Americas. The Dutch in particular were deeply involved in smuggling in the West Indies.<sup>13</sup> The prevalence of significant levels of illicit commerce is not surprising. Individual states developed laws for the conduct of oceanic trade and shipping along mercantilist lines, but merchants and consumers had a growing demand for European manufactured goods in the colonies as well as interests in commodities that could not be delivered through legal means.

Mercantilist policies increased the burden of taxation and the accumulation of a national debt. Funds to support British overseas trade and expansion came from indirect taxes and from the ability of the Bank of England, founded in 1694 under a Dutch monarch, to raise loans and maintain a national debt. Parliament agreed that government loans would be guaranteed against tax yields. Indirect taxation in the form of customs and excise revenue (including colonial sugar, rice, and tobacco) rose significantly in the eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup> The national debt escalated from £16.7 million to £744.9 million between 1697 and 1815. Peacetime taxation multiplied by a factor of 15 over that period. The success of the state's handling of a "financial revolution" after the Glorious Revolution is an important reason why Britain

10 John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688–1783* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 40.

11 N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649–1815* (London: Allen Lane, 2004).

12 Kenneth Morgan, "Robert Dinwiddie's Reports on the British American Colonies," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, LXV no. 2 (2008): 305–346, 322, 336, 342.

13 Wim Klooster, "Inter-Imperial Smuggling in the Americas, 1600–1800" in *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500–1830*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 141–180, 140, and *Illicit Riches: Dutch Trade in the Caribbean, 1648–1795* (Leiden: KITLV, 1998).

14 Ralph Davis, "The Rise of Protection in England, 1689–1786," *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 19 (1966): 306–317.



was able to limit French territorial ambitions in North America at the Peace of Paris in 1763.<sup>15</sup>

The Dutch played a significant role in establishing sound, effective public credit in Britain after the Glorious Revolution. Dutch financiers and advisors accompanying William of Orange to London brought with them practices such as the resale of shares in joint-stock corporations. This helped to establish stock exchanges in Britain. The Bank of England was modeled on the Amsterdam *Wisselbank*; the national debt also followed Dutch practice. Adam Smith noted the importance of Dutch overseas investment: "The mercantile capital of Holland is so great that it is...continually overflowing, sometimes into the public funds of foreign countries."<sup>16</sup> Dutch investors were attracted to British securities by the high return on English bonds and by the convergence of Dutch and English public debt institutions.<sup>17</sup>

After the financial storm of the South Sea Bubble in 1720 had passed, foreign holdings of British government securities (especially by the Dutch) reached a substantial size in 1723–1724 and increased until the 1780s, when over half of the 350 million guilders of Dutch holdings in foreign government debt were invested in England. In addition, Dutch investment dominated the foreign holdings of the London-based South Sea Company in the 1720s and 1730s.<sup>18</sup> These developments occurred because the Dutch had substantial surpluses that they could not invest at home owing to the decline in their own industrial base and because of the efficiency with which public credit was established in England as part of the "financial revolution."<sup>19</sup> Moreover, interest rates were often higher in London than in Amsterdam and the British government was

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- 15 Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, 30; Julian Hoppit, "Checking the Leviathan, 1688–1832," in *The Political Economy of British Historical Experience*, ed. Winch and O'Brien, 267–294, 268, 284.
  - 16 R.H. Campbell and Andrew S. Skinner, eds., *Adam Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 2: 632.
  - 17 Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Fortune, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 142.
  - 18 Jan de Vries, "The Netherlands in the New World: The Legacy of European Fiscal, Monetary, and Trading Institutions for New World Development from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries," in *Transferring Wealth and Power from the Old World to the New World: Monetary and Fiscal Institutions in the 17th through the 19th Centuries*, ed. Michael D. Bordo and Roberto Cortés-Condo (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 100–139, 132.
  - 19 P.G.M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England: A Study in the Development of Public Credit, 1688–1756* (London: Macmillan, 1967).

more reliable in repaying loans than the French parlements. During the early 1780s, the Dutch sharply reduced their investments in Britain because the Netherlands and Britain became enemies in the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780–1784) and the continuing American Revolutionary War was a threat to public credit. Until then, however, the Dutch regarded the government debt serviced by the Bank of England to be as secure as the state debt of the Netherlands. Dutch loans helped significantly in paying for Britain's Continental armies and Continental allies during the eighteenth century.<sup>20</sup> Thus Holland made a significant contribution to the level of public credit in Britain, enabling Anglo-Dutch economic relations to be conducted peacefully, with British fiscal-military backing, in the Atlantic world.

## II

The Navigation Acts permitted the re-export of colonial commodities to non-Anglophone centers after the goods had entered and cleared a British or British-colonial port. Anglo-Dutch economic relations benefited from this commerce, especially in relation to the re-export of North American rice and tobacco from Britain to the Netherlands. Between 60 and 80 percent of the rice exported from South Carolina and Georgia to Britain ended up in Holland and Germany. Britain was a low consumer of rice, but rice was an important substitute commodity for grain in several continental European markets, including the Dutch Republic. By the early 1750s, contemporaries noted that the Dutch were the most consistent Northern European buyers of such rice and that they dominated the market. Indeed, between 1760–1763 and 1772–1774 British re-exports of rice to Holland trebled.<sup>21</sup> The Dutch were also avid consumers of tobacco imports even though tobacco was manufactured in the

20 Larry Neal, *The Rise of Financial Capitalism: International Capital Markets in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 17, 142, 147, 212; Alice Clare Carter, *Getting, Spending and Investing in Early Modern Times: Essays on Dutch, English and Huguenot Economic History* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Company, 1975), 39, 45; James C. Riley, *International Government Finance and the Amsterdam Capital Market 1740–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 125; Charles Wilson, *Anglo-Dutch Commerce & Finance in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1941), 69, 75, 78, 117, 137–158, 198.

21 Kenneth Morgan, "The Organization of the Colonial American Rice Trade," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 52, no. 3 (1995): 433–452, 436–437; R.C. Nash, "South Carolina and the Atlantic Economy in the late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 45 (1992): 677–702, 692.

United Provinces.<sup>22</sup> Already by 1700 Holland imported one-third of the tobacco imported to England and then re-exported. A half-century later over half of all re-exported tobacco from Britain (notably from Scotland) went to the Netherlands: between 1755 and 1759, for instance, the Netherlands imported almost twice as much British colonial re-exported tobacco as France. Between 1771 and 1792 The Dutch market was the most important destination for re-exports of British tobacco.<sup>23</sup>

After peace talks were concluded between England and the Netherlands in 1674, trade and economic cooperation between the two countries resumed rapidly. New York in this process became a leading player in Anglo-Dutch economic relations in the Atlantic world for nearly a century thereafter as the Dutch contingent of merchants in Manhattan continued to trade with both England and the Netherlands. Some of this trade was conducted legally. Holland supplied German osnaburghs (cheap linens), Indian calicoes, muslins and taffeta, paper and glazed tiles. Dutch city inhabitants were entitled to receive letters of denization which gave them the right to send vessels from the British North American colonies to the Netherlands provided they entered an English port on their outward and return journeys to observe British customs procedures under the Navigation Acts. Dutch-speaking merchants in New York were joined there by factors of some Amsterdam trading houses. New England, notably Massachusetts and Rhode Island, also conducted trade with Dutch merchants in the Netherlands and the West Indies.<sup>24</sup>

A substantial amount of Dutch trade with Britain's American colonies, however, involved smuggling via various loopholes in the mercantilist system. This "informal supranational trade" was part and parcel of transatlantic interconnections in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>25</sup> In the 1740s, for example, Thomas Hancock sent ships via a triangular route between Boston,

22 For the value of English re-exports of tobacco to Holland, 1700–1760, see Ormrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires*, 189.

23 Jacob M. Price, *France and the Chesapeake: A History of the French Tobacco Monopoly, 1674–1791, and of its Relationship to the British and American Tobacco Trades*, 2 vols. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973), 2: 735 and Philipp Robinson Rössner, *Scottish Trade in the Wake of Union, 1700–60. The Rise of a Warehouse Economy* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2008), 328, 333.

24 Enthoven, "Going Dutch," 40.

25 Claudia Schnurmann, "Atlantic Trade and American Identities: The Correlations of Supranational Commerce, Political Opposition, and Colonial Regionalism," in *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel*, ed. Peter A. Coclanis (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 186–204, 187, 192.

the Caribbean islands and Holland. Fish was dispatched from Boston to the West Indies on these voyages, payment taken in bills or produce, and freight loaded for Holland. Hancock also received goods from Amsterdam via St. Eustatius.<sup>26</sup> Plenty of smuggled Bohea tea made its way either directly from the Netherlands or via overland routes to New England. It sold for much less than the price of tea supplied by the English East India Company. It has been argued that such smuggling of tea from the Netherlands helped to create the conditions for the Boston Tea Party in 1773.<sup>27</sup> Irish merchants and ship captains were responsible for some of this trade by sending tea aboard provisions ships from Irish ports to the West Indies whence it was shipped to mainland North America among vessels laden with molasses.<sup>28</sup>

New Yorkers found it relatively easy before 1776 to land goods clandestinely at coves and inlets along the shores of New Jersey, Connecticut and Long Island Sound, especially where there was no customs house. Sometimes these shipments arrived via elaborate multilateral routes to avoid customs regulations and searches.<sup>29</sup> On other occasions, roundabout voyages were unnecessary because false ships' papers could be purchased or agreements made with foreign merchants for secret landings. On still other occasions, goods were dispatched from Dutch ports, transferred to English- or colonial-owned vessels in small Caribbean islands, and then sent to a landing place such as Sandy Hook, where cargoes could be off-loaded and taken overland to New York while the vessels arrived empty in the Hudson River.<sup>30</sup> Coarse woolen cloths, guns, gunpowder, tea and fine cloth were among the goods landed in these places from Amsterdam at lower wholesale prices than from English merchant firms. Dutch merchants usually offered 12 months' credit to pay for

26 W.T. Baxter, *The House of Hancock: Business in Boston 1724–1775* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1945), 83–85, 94.

27 John W. Tyler, *Smugglers & Patriots: Boston Merchants and the Advent of the American Revolution* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986), 187, 189–190, 192; Benjamin L. Carp, "Did Dutch smugglers provoke the Boston Tea Party?" *Early American Studies* 10, no. 2 (2012): 335–359.

28 Thomas M. Truxes, *Irish-American Trade, 1660–1783* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 45.

29 On Anglo-Dutch smuggling in New York, see Virginia D. Harrington, *The New York Merchant on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), 250–276.

30 Thomas C. Barrow, *Trade and Empire: The British Customs Service in Colonial America 1660–1775* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 148; Frank Wesley Pitman, *The Development of the British West Indies 1700–1763* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1917), 193.

these goods. Payments were made in bills of exchange on Amsterdam or by shipping wine from the Azores, Madeira and the Canary Islands. To facilitate such trade, four prominent merchant partnerships in Amsterdam had close connections with Dutch-speaking merchants in New York: John de Neufville & Son, John Hodshon, Daniel Crommelin & Son, and Levinus Clarkson.<sup>31</sup> For the return voyage from New York or New England ports to the Netherlands, mercantilist regulations could sometimes be avoided by sending ships via the Orkneys, where they cleared part of their cargo and then continued their voyage around the east coast of Scotland and England to Amsterdam or Rotterdam.<sup>32</sup>

During the eighteenth century, New York's trade with Dutch merchants was not just confined to voyages that followed various routes between Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Manhattan; it also involved considerable commercial activity with the Caribbean and the "Wild Coast" of Dutch settlements in Northeastern South America. A flourishing trade was maintained between Colonial British North America, primarily New York and New England, and the Dutch colony of Suriname. This was a legitimate trade within the rules of the Navigation Acts, which did not restrict Americans from exporting provisions to the colonies of Continental European powers.<sup>33</sup> Such trade was illicit under Dutch laws, but Suriname merchants were willing participants because Dutch shipowners avoided servicing the shipping routes between Paramaibo and American colonies for provisions or low value cargoes.<sup>34</sup>

North American ships accounted for 90 percent of the trans-Caribbean traffic through Suriname. Merchants in New York and New England largely financed this trade. The total value of Suriname exports to North America between 1705 and 1744 was over 1.5 million guilders while the total value of North American imports into Suriname in the same period was over 3 million guilders. Suriname sent molasses and rum to New England ports. New York and New England ports shipped building supplies and household items to Suriname but particularly followed a specialized trade in supplying small horses, suitable for no other market, to Suriname's plantations. Horses were needed as draught

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31 Cathy Matson, *Merchants & Empire: Trading in Colonial New York* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 146–147, 208–211.

32 Barrow, *Trade and Empire*, 179; Neil R. Stout, *The Royal Navy in America, 1760–1775: A Study of Enforcement of British Colonial Policy in the Era of the American Revolution* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1973), 44.

33 Baxter, *The House of Hancock*, 54–55; Pitman, *The Development of the British West Indies*, 197.

34 Karwan Fatah-Black, "Paramaibo as Dutch and Atlantic nodal point, 1650–1795" in this volume.

animals for sugar mills, but they could not survive an Atlantic crossing.<sup>35</sup> In 1720 it was noted that Suriname received all its mill horses from Massachusetts and Rhode Island, as well as fish and stores.<sup>36</sup>

Two other Dutch colonies on the Northeastern coast of South America had substantial trading contacts with North America. These were the adjacent settlements of Demerara-Essequibo and Berbice. Between 1700 and 1819, 1965 ships entered Essequibo from North America. Demerara's North American trade was larger than this. Between 1740 and 1819 some 7044 ships entered Demerara from North America, including many vessels from New England ports, New York City, Philadelphia and Baltimore. As with Suriname, there was a regular trade in horses to drive sugar mills.<sup>37</sup> As most plantations in Demerara were owned by British investors by 1760, the trade between North America and that Dutch colony was stimulated partly by the need for livestock and commodities to suit joint Anglo-Dutch needs.<sup>38</sup>

Curaçao and St. Eustatius were essential nodes for shipments involving trade with either Britain or its colonies. These Dutch islands were well-situated to take advantage of intercolonial trade across national boundaries: they had proactive middlemen who maintained their livelihoods by oiling the wheels of legal and illegal commerce.<sup>39</sup> St. Eustatius lay near the British islands of Nevis, St. Kitts, Antigua and Montserrat and the French island of Guadeloupe. Curaçao was less than 40 miles from the Venezuelan Coast, offering a gateway

35 See Johannes Postma, "Breaching the Mercantile Barriers of the Dutch Colonial Empire: North American Trade with Surinam during the Eighteenth Century," in *Merchant Organization and Maritime Trade in the North Atlantic, 1660–1815*, *Research in Maritime History* no. 15, ed. Olaf Uwe Janzen (St. John's, Newfoundland: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1998), 107–131 and his "Suriname and its Atlantic Connections, 1667–1795" in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585–1817*, ed. Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 287–322, 294, 300–305, 316.

36 Pitman, *The Development of the British West Indies*, 210.

37 Eric Willem van der Oest, "The Forgotten Colonies of Essequibo and Demerara, 1700–1814," in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce*, ed. Postma and Enthoven, 323–361, 354–356.

38 British plantation ownership in Demerara is examined in Gert Oostindie, "A Victory of 'British Capital, Industry, and Perseverance' over Dutch 'Old School'? The Takeover of Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo, 1750–1815," *BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review* 127, no. 4 (2012): 28–55. See also Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: The Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623–1775* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 442–444. For an important Barbadian investor in Demerara in the 1740s, see S.D. Smith, *Slavery, Family and Gentry Capitalism in the British Atlantic: The World of the Lascelles, 1648–1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 105–107.

39 For illicit trade at Curaçao, see Linda M. Rupert, *Creolization and Contraband: Curaçao in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

to Spanish American possessions. Both St. Eustatius and Curaçao benefited from the growth of the intra-Caribbean commodity trade – the *kleine vaart* or small circuit – after 1700.<sup>40</sup> They served “as general emporia for everything that was bought or sold in the Caribbean.” Both islands had limited produce of their own. But the range and turnover of goods from elsewhere available at these free ports ensured that ship captains could find cargoes suitable for destinations elsewhere in the Caribbean, in North America or back in Europe. It was reported in 1766 that all sorts of North American goods were brought to St. Eustatius. The French were active in trading there and exchanged their molasses, rum and cotton in St. Eustatius for North American provisions.<sup>41</sup>

Curaçao and St. Eustatius had further advantages as transit points to facilitate Anglo-Dutch economic relations. Speculative ventures to Curaçao and St. Eustatius stood a very good chance of acquiring the commodities, commercial information and bills of exchange they needed.<sup>42</sup> Sloops were supplied from Bermuda to Curaçao and St. Eustatius to facilitate trade on those islands.<sup>43</sup> Goods were often cheaper in these Dutch islands than elsewhere in the Caribbean. Dutch and East India goods were taxed at a modest 2 percent ad valorem duty in Statia. In 1770 rum could be purchased in these Dutch islands at six pence per gallon (or 40 percent less) than in Barbados or Jamaica.<sup>44</sup> Anglo-American merchants were drawn to St. Eustatius partly because trade there helped to overcome their negative balance of payments with Britain. New Englanders could earn significant credits in their carrying trade to the Dutch Caribbean islands.<sup>45</sup>

Curaçao was originally a base for Dutch smuggling to Spanish America. It had a capital city, Willemstad, with a natural port, multilingual merchants

40 Enthoven, “An Assessment of Dutch Transatlantic Commerce, 1585–1817,” 390. Contacts between St. Eustatius and the British West Indies in the early eighteenth century are discussed in Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*, 182–201.

41 Richard C. Simmons and Peter D.G. Thomas, eds., *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments respecting North America, 1754–1783*, 6 vols. (New York: Kraus International Publications, 1984), 2: 575.

42 Richard Pares, *Yankees and Creoles: The Trade between North America and the West Indies before the American Revolution* (London: Longmans, Green, 1956), 101.

43 Klooster, “Inter-Imperial Smuggling,” 167.

44 Michael J. Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680–1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 169; John J. McCusker, *Rum and the American Revolution: The Rum Trade and the Balance of Payments of the Thirteen Continental Colonies, 1650–1775* (New York: Garland, 1989), 403–404.

45 Victor Enthoven, “‘That Abominable Nest of Pirates’: St. Eustatius and the North Americans, 1680–1780,” *Early American Studies* 10, no. 2 (2012): 239–301, 243, 269.

with access to bills of exchange, and facilities for ship repairs. Representatives of Dutch-speaking New York commercial houses were resident there.<sup>46</sup> It was noted in 1710/1711 that Curaçao received many provisions (bread, butter, flour, cheese, rice) from British colonies in North America and rum, sugar, cotton, ginger and indigo from Jamaica and other British West Indian islands. Cacao, linens, muslins, canvas, riggings and sails were among the commodities exchanged in return for these products. Curaçao's trade with British West Indian settlements became an important facet of the commerce of those islands. This can be seen from a contemporary observation from 1726 that the current problems of private traders in Jamaica arose from insufficient ships to pursue an effective illicit trade with Curaçao.<sup>47</sup>

St. Eustatius was an important rendezvous point for North American traders to transport fish and lumber indirectly to the French Windward Islands and to receive French Caribbean produce in return.<sup>48</sup> Curaçao and St. Eustatius had few plantations but were widely used for the exchange of goods across imperial boundaries. Dutch, British, American, French and Spanish merchants and shipowners all made use of the convenience of these small places for the circulation of goods either to North America or within a flourishing intra-Caribbean trade.<sup>49</sup> After Parliament passed the Molasses Act (1733), which imposed heavy duties on rum, molasses and sugar imported into the North American colonies, St. Eustatius became a nodal point – or black market – through which cheap French molasses and sugar reached North America.<sup>50</sup> In 1770 some 58,000 gallons of molasses was exported to British North America from Suriname.<sup>51</sup> In 1744, 525 ships from the British West Indies entered St. Eustatius and 476 vessels cleared from there to the British Caribbean. In 1776, 354 vessels entered St. Eustatius from the British Caribbean islands and 475 ships left St. Eustatius for the British islands. Ships plying between St. Eustatius and St. Kitts were prominent in this trade.<sup>52</sup>

46 Wim Klooster, "Curaçao and the Caribbean Transit Trade," in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce*, ed. Postma and Enthoven, 203–210, 204; Enthoven, "Going Dutch," 41.

47 Stephen Alexander Fortune, *Merchants and Jews: The Struggle for British West Indian Commerce, 1650–1750* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1984), 127, 143.

48 Richard Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies 1739–1763* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), 128, 350. For Curaçao's connections with the French Caribbean, see Wim Klooster, "Curaçao as a Transit Center to the Spanish Main and the French West Indies," in this volume.

49 See, for example, Simmons and Thomas, eds., *Proceedings and Debates*, 2: 578.

50 Enthoven, "That Abominable Nest of Pirates," 272.

51 McCusker, *Rum and the American Revolution*, 338.

52 Cornelis Ch. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas 1680–1791* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1985), 204–205.



Curaçao and St. Eustatius served a particular purpose for British and Colonial North American merchants as rendezvous points because they were neutral in wartime. The Dutch at Curaçao and St. Eustatius (both of which had sizeable Sephardic Jewish trading communities) had continuing trade links with merchants in Barbados and the British Leeward Islands of Anguilla, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis.<sup>53</sup> Sephardic Jewish merchants forged strong connections between Barbados and Curacao.<sup>54</sup> Governor Henry Worsley of Barbados in 1723 claimed there was an extensive network of illicit trade with Barbados that included Curaçao and St. Eustatius, both of which served as a vital source of specie for Barbadians.<sup>55</sup> Other parties benefited from the commercial centers of Curaçao and St. Eustatius. Dutch merchants exploited their West Indian islands as transit points for the exchange of commodities and finance by sometimes falsifying papers in order to trade with the settlements of other European powers in the Caribbean. They were quick to exploit lax customs procedures.<sup>56</sup> But the English also made full use of St. Eustatius as a commercial nodal point: by 1750 most of the island's inhabitants were English and some of these settlers had set up stillhouses there to distill French rum. Evidence survives from 1758 of extensive cargoes of beef arriving at St. Eustatius from Ireland.<sup>57</sup> Madeira wine also flowed via the Dutch Caribbean islands for smuggling into North America.<sup>58</sup>

Curaçao shipped many of its Caribbean imports to the Netherlands: in 1710/1711 it was noted that about 50 ships left the island each year laden with English plantation goods for Holland.<sup>59</sup> But Curaçao also sent cacao, slaves, molasses and bills of exchange to New York to be credited against the accounts of those who had sent Dutch goods to the Caribbean. St. Eustatius reshipped many goods it received to other parts of the West Indies.<sup>60</sup> American tobacco

53 Enthoven, "An Assessment of Dutch Transatlantic Commerce," 412; Thomas M. Truxes, *Defying Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 58, 60.

54 Koot, "Anglo-Dutch Trade in the Chesapeake and the British Caribbean, 1621–1733," in this volume.

55 Fortune, *Merchants and Jews*, 102.

56 Richard Pares, *Colonial Blockade and Neutral Rights 1739–1763* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), 205–206.

57 Pitman, *The Development of the British West Indies*, 421.

58 David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 121.

59 Fortune, *Merchants and Jews*, 143.

60 Wim Klooster, "An Overview of Dutch Trade with the Americas, 1600–1800," in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce*, ed. Postma and Enthoven, 365–384, 377; Matson, *Merchants & Empire*, 185.

arriving at St. Eustatius was transferred to ships sailing for Holland. Smuggled goods were sent back for clandestine landing on the shores of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Rhode Island. Merchants based in the British West Indies stored goods at St. Eustatius because they feared French attacks on their own islands. Statia's textile sales to other Caribbean islands exceeded £100,000 sterling a year in the 1750s.<sup>61</sup>

New York and New England maintained continuing commercial connections with Curaçao and St. Eustatius. Thus between December 1729 and December 1730, for example, 29 ships cleared New York for Curaçao and 12 vessels entered New York from Curaçao. Most of these vessels maintained trade balances in favor of New York.<sup>62</sup> These links aided the illegal shipment of goods from Dutch to British hands and vice versa in North America and the West Indies. During the 1740s, for example, the New York merchant William Beekman sent provisions (flour, beef, pork, sometimes butter) to Curaçao and St. Eustatius. These shipments were mainly intended for French and Spanish subjects. Beekman received payment from Curaçao in cash (mainly Spanish pieces of eight). He was paid from St. Eustatius in molasses, sugar, cotton wool or gunpowder.<sup>63</sup> By 1756 it was common for ships from New York to clear customs for Nevis and St. Kitts, thereby observing the provisions of the Navigation Acts, but then to head for St. Eustatius, often using forged certificates to smooth their passage. These vessels dropped off embargoed grain for French buyers and picked up cacao and sugar intended for Amsterdam without paying duties.<sup>64</sup> It was claimed at the time that New Yorkers acquired considerable riches by carrying goods for the French by way of St. Eustatius (and also via the Danish Caribbean islands).<sup>65</sup> But commodity shipments also flowed back from St. Eustatius to North America. A statement from 1771 suggested "it was well known that St. Eustatius is the channel through which the colonies are now chiefly supplied with tea."<sup>66</sup>

New York had a significant commercial involvement with Curaçao during the Seven Years' War. This has been explained by New York and Curaçao both

61 Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade*, 166.

62 Pares, *Yankees and Creoles*, 49; Pitman, *The Development of the British West Indies*, 212.

63 Philip L. White, *The Beekmans of New York in Politics and Commerce 1647-1877* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1956), 319-320.

64 Matson, *Merchants & Empire*, 272.

65 Pitman, *The Development of the British West Indies*, 312.

66 K.G. Davies, ed., *Documents of the American Revolution 1770-1783 (Colonial Office Series). Volume III. Transcripts 1771* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1973), 80. See also Philip L. White, ed., *The Beekman Mercantile Papers 1746-1799*, 3 vols. (New York: New York Historical Society, 1956), 2: 686, 694.

having numerous Dutch-speaking merchants and by the wide-ranging commodities available through commerce with New York.<sup>67</sup> In addition, examples abound of New York vessels calling at Curaçao and St. Eustatius in the Seven Years' War to purchase prize goods for shipment to Holland, relying on London merchants to transfer funds to pay for the transaction, and to load logwood on Dutch vessels bound to Amsterdam.<sup>68</sup> These international exchanges of goods were not always welcomed by national rivals. Thus Britain tried to reduce French commercial activity in neutral St. Eustatius during the Seven Years' War by authorizing the seizure of Dutch ships supplying the French.<sup>69</sup>

Considerable Dutch-Irish cooperation also existed during the Seven Years' War in relation to Curaçao and St. Eustatius. Merchants in Ireland chartered ships to provide salted provisions for these Dutch islands for transfer to the French West Indies. Irish expatriate firms in Holland shipped goods to St. Eustatius and Curaçao under the Dutch flag's protection. Irish merchants were found among the expatriate community on St. Eustatius, sometimes in the guise of naturalized Dutch citizens. Irish firms in the French West Indies had commercial links with the Dutch West Indies and acted as factors for Dutch merchant houses in Europe and the Caribbean. Bills of exchange arising from trade with Curaçao and St. Eustatius were sometimes cleared by members of London's Irish community. Irish merchants also sent salted beef and pork from Cork and Waterford to the Dutch and French West Indies on vessels registered in Amsterdam and Rotterdam.<sup>70</sup>

St. Eustatius was a bustling site of international flows of trade during the American War of Independence. It was a cosmopolitan site for trade, with French, Spanish, English and Dutch merchants based there.<sup>71</sup> In May 1776 Sir Joseph Yorke, the British ambassador at The Hague, stated that "St. Eustatius is the rendezvous of everything and everybody meant to be clandestinely conveyed to America."<sup>72</sup> Thus, during the American Revolutionary War, arms shipments were made to the island. These were mainly intended for the Americans. It has been suggested that St. Eustatius was "probably the single

67 Truxes, *Defying Empire*, 60.

68 Matson, *Merchants & Empire*, 272.

69 Barrow, *Trade and Empire*, 162.

70 Thomas M. Truxes, "Dutch-Irish Cooperation in the Mid-Eighteenth-Century Wartime Atlantic," *Early American Studies* 10, no. 2 (2012): 302–334, 313, 317–328.

71 Evangeline W. and Charles M. Andrews, eds., *Journal of a Lady of Quality; Being the Narrative of a Journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina and Portugal, in the Years 1774–1776* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), 136–137.

72 J. Franklin Jameson, "St. Eustatius in the American Revolution," *American Historical Review* 8 (1903): 683–708, 688.

largest source of gunpowder for the North American revolutionaries.”<sup>73</sup> But Britain also benefited from St. Eustatius as a commercial entrepôt during the war. Many British colonial merchants emigrated there in 1776. They built new warehouses, received crops from British colonial planters, purchased provisions and American tobacco, and dealt with American rebel traders. Provisions from St. Eustatius were sent to feed slaves on Antigua.<sup>74</sup> The Philadelphia merchant Stephen Girard summed up the commercial bustle of this small island in his remark in 1780 that “there is here [i.e. in St. Eustatius] a swarm of men from all parts of the world only occupied in settling their affairs quickly to get away as soon as possible.”<sup>75</sup>

Until about 1780 St. Eustatius justified its reputation as “the golden rock” because it was one of the richest trading centers in the Caribbean. Its demise as a commercial entrepôt came with a British military assault on the island.<sup>76</sup> On 3 February 1781 the British navy captured over 150 vessels at St. Eustatius together with goods and properties worth over £3 million – much of the seizure belonging to British colonial merchants and planters.<sup>77</sup> After the war ended in 1783, St. Eustatius experienced more competition from other colonies where ships of various nations exchanged goods, and, as a consequence, it never recovered its former position as a significant transit point for goods in the Caribbean.<sup>78</sup>

Bermuda’s intercolonial commerce also included a significant illicit trade with Curaçao and St. Eustatius. Bermudians gained international news, European manufactured goods, coffee, chocolate, rum, molasses and other tropical produce at these islands, which also served as markets for selling vessels. They benefited from the relatively cheap prices for goods offered by traders in Curaçao and Statia. Bermuda’s ship captains sold salt, dyewoods and turtles on these Dutch islands. These transactions were allowed under

73 Klooster, “Inter-Imperial Smuggling,” 177.

74 Selwyn H.H. Carrington, *The British West Indies during the American Revolution* (Dordrecht: Foris Publications, 1988), 76–80; Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 218.

75 Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Pennsylvania* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 217–218.

76 Ronald Hurst, *The Golden Rock: An Episode of the American War of Independence, 1775–1783* (London: US Naval Institute Press, 1996), 1, 73; Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean*, 146; Jameson, “St. Eustatius in the American Revolution,” 683–708.

77 Carrington, *The British West Indies during the American Revolution*, 80.

78 Han Jordaan and Victor Wilson, “The Eighteenth Century Danish, Dutch and Swedish Free Ports in the Northeastern Caribbean: Continuity and change,” in this volume.

British law; what was not permitted was smuggling goods that should have passed through British colonial customs houses. Bermudian-Dutch smuggling was already extensive by the 1710s. Bermudians acted mainly as buyers in these Dutch islands. They gained the cooperation of merchants there who were adept at using Bermudian vessels to ship their goods to British North American and Caribbean ports under the guise of using British registries of the Bermudian sloops. As Governor William Popple of Bermuda noted in 1749, Dutch captains "could go to each English settlement once, give in bond, and never return there again." Bermudians also tapped the market for selling their vessels in Dutch Caribbean islands. By the 1720s, they regularly sold between 15 and 20 vessels per year at St. Eustatius, about half of the ships they constructed annually. In 1741 Governor Alured Popple of Bermuda stated that "our sloops are generally built for sale and the Dutch are the general purchasers." Customs house ledgers in 1770 state that Bermuda's legal sugar imports amounted to 78 cwt. but Bermudians took three times that amount just from St. Eustatius. In the same year Bermudian ships cleared Statia with at least 11,000 gallons of rum, which was twice the amount legally landed.<sup>79</sup>

### III

Anglo-Dutch economic connections were extensive in the Atlantic world between the Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution. During almost a century of peaceful relations between Britain and the Netherlands when war on the high seas was a frequent occurrence between Britain and her rivals (France, Spain, North America), the Dutch supported Britain's public credit by significant amounts of investment in the British national debt while the fiscal-military strength of Britain protected Anglo-Dutch commercial endeavors from enemy incursions. Neither Dutch public finances, which lacked a centralized fiscal system, nor the Dutch navy were able to offer such strong protection for Dutch transatlantic trade between 1689 and 1783.<sup>80</sup> Cordial economic relations between Britain and the Netherlands therefore played a crucial role in supporting the overseas commerce of both nations. As British settlements in the Americas were extensive and Dutch colonies were relatively small, each nation could conduct her trade to take account of their special

79 Jarvis, *In the Eye of all Trade*, 160, 167–170, 172–173.

80 de Vries, "The Netherlands in the New World," 109; Jaap R. Bruijn, *The Dutch Navy of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993).

advantages. British mercantilist restrictions helped to protect the wealth and profits of her transatlantic trade to Britain and the British American colonies, while the Dutch role as carriers of trades through transit points gave Holland a pivotal role in the international commercial emporium of trade between North America, the Caribbean and European markets.

The flexibility of the English navigation system allowed Anglo-Dutch commercial relations to flourish in the Atlantic trading world. Within the purview of the Navigation Acts, Britain re-exported colonial staple produce from London and Glasgow to Amsterdam and Rotterdam while British colonial merchants plied livestock and commodities between New York or New England and the Dutch colonies of Demerara-Essequibo, Berbice and Suriname. Goods were dispatched from Holland directly to New York and New England, with Dutch-speaking merchants in North America using their denization rights to claim legal importation. Probably more important, however, was the smuggling of tea, rum and molasses by the Dutch from the Caribbean to New York, New Jersey and New England in defiance of laws such as the Molasses Act (1733) and customs regulations. Within the Caribbean, the international exchange of goods via the nodal points of Curaçao and St. Eustatius enabled Britain to take advantage of the availability of French produce in neutral islands. This commerce suited the Dutch because it fitted their niche role as carriers of commodities and facilitators of commodity exchange beyond national imperial boundaries. It also served the British need to provide provisions and other commodities to Bermuda and its Leeward and Windward Island settlements, especially during wartime.

Anglo-Dutch cooperation in the Atlantic trading world began to unravel towards the end of the American War of Independence. In early 1781 British naval forces sacked St. Eustatius, which never recovered its commercial position in Caribbean trade thereafter. Spain opened Trinidad to international trade and France made St. Lucia a free port in 1787. These changes undermined Statia's role as a transit point for commodity exchange in the Caribbean.<sup>81</sup> Britain and Holland engaged in the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War between 1780 and 1784 after the Dutch supported the rebellious North Americans against British sovereignty. This war brought the Dutch transatlantic slave trade temporarily to a halt.<sup>82</sup> French occupation of the Netherlands in 1795 led Britain to treat Holland (now under the guise of the Batavian Republic) as a threat and in

81 Jordaen and Wilson, "The Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports of the Northeastern Caribbean," in this volume.

82 Johannes Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 284–285.

subsequent years Demerara-Essequibo and Berbice fell under British control during the Napoleonic Wars. Substantial British investments in the plantations of those territories ensued.<sup>83</sup> At the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, however, Britain and the Netherlands never fully revived the inter- and intra-Caribbean trade and the commercial connections between North America and the West Indies that had characterized the years of Anglo-Dutch cooperation between the Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution.

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83 Seymour Drescher, *Econocide* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977), 94–96, 102.

# A Network-Based Merchant Empire

## *Dutch Trade in the Hispanic Atlantic (1680–1740)*

Ana Crespo Solana

Spanish colonial trade in the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries was intended to be a state-controlled monopoly business. At the same time, this trade was financed privately and involved many non-Spanish actors. Since the early sixteenth century, when Spanish monopolies were instituted, there were two major restrictions in place regarding colonial trade. Firstly, commerce could only be carried out from a single port city (Seville, between 1503 until 1717, Cádiz from 1717 onwards). These cities would be the centers for the organization, administration, and taxation of the colonial trade. Secondly, the right both to trade with, and to travel to, the Americas was exclusive to the citizens of the kingdoms in the Spanish monarchy. Thus, trade was a privilege granted by the king to his subjects.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, ironically, an ever-increasing participation of foreign merchants characterized Spanish trade with the Americas. The participation of foreign merchants highlights the discrepancies between legislation and trade to the Americas as it was actually practiced.<sup>2</sup> Since the very beginning of the Atlantic expansion, the economic and financial structure of the Spanish-American empire was constructed from an intricate network of transnational interests. The Spanish empire was a truly multinational enterprise, and the Spanish element was but one among many.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter focuses on the contributions of Dutch and/or Flemish merchants to this truly multinational enterprise. They were of vital importance

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- 1 José María Oliva Melgar, *El monopolio de Indias en el siglo XVII y la economía andaluza. La oportunidad que nunca existió* (Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2004); See also: Ana Crespo Solana, “Merchants under close scrutiny: Spanish monopoly with America and laws against foreigners’ illegal commerce (1714–1730),” in *Urban Europe in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Lars Nilson (Stads- och Kommun: Historika Institutet, 2006), CD-ROM.
- 2 For a discussion of the contradictions between law and reality in a different colonial context, see Aviva Ben-Ur and Jessica Vance Roitman, “Adultery Here and There: Crossing Sexual Boundaries in the Dutch Jewish Atlantic,” in this volume.
- 3 Henry Kamen, *Empire: How Spain Became a World Power, 1492–1763* (Harper Collins: New York, 2003).



for the functioning of the Spanish Atlantic system, as I will show by focusing on the “nodal point” of Cádiz. The Hispanic monarchy had to fundamentally alter its relationship with its former enemies in order to maximize the profits to be had from American trade. The Dutch went from enemies to allies and potential beneficiaries of this empire as they became intermediaries for, and collaborators with, the Spanish. Their vital role also illustrates the contradiction in the Spanish monopoly laws whereby foreign persons who were not subjects of the King of Spain were supposedly not allowed to participate in the colonial trade, while at the same time the crown itself was the first to act in breach of these regulations. Foreigners, therefore, participated widely in the “Spanish” colonial trade to the Americas despite the laws prohibiting this.

Although the focus of this chapter is on the Dutch, it should be stressed that the Dutch were only one group in a long line of foreigners who participated actively in the Spanish trade to the Americas. For more than two centuries, the foreign presence in Seville and Cádiz, as well as in other Spanish port cities linked with the Atlantic economy, increased considerably and was highly lucrative to all parties involved.<sup>4</sup> Many scholars assert the importance of the trade conducted by foreigners and believe that the colonial system could not have survived without them. According to Oliva Melgar, “The best part of Spanish trade was in foreign merchants’ hands [...]. Foreign ships amounted to three quarters of the total number of ships that participated in the American trade, and foreign goods represented the bulk of the goods exported to the New World.”<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the Dutch are a particularly interesting example of this participation of foreigners in the Spanish trade with the Americas. The Dutch trade vividly illustrate the contradiction between the laws “on the books” and the reality of trade as it was practiced. But it also highlights the fact that although the Dutch and the Spanish monarchy had been at war for 80 years, a vibrant trade by Dutch merchants was permitted and even, in some cases, encouraged. This, in turn, demonstrates two things: the necessity of foreigners for the maintenance of the American trade – a necessity that sometimes outweighed political concerns – and the cultural

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4 For a more detailed explanation of the Spanish trade monopoly see Ana Crespo Solana, “The Spanish colonial empire in an age of transition: Political discontinuity and commercial interests at the time of the Treaty of Utrecht,” in *Peace was made here: The Treaties of Utrecht*, ed. Renger de Bruijn and Maarten Brickman (Rastatt and Baden: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2013), 42–49.

5 Oliva Melgar, *El monopolio*, 537–538.

integration of many of the Flemish and Dutch traders into the mercantile system of Cádiz.<sup>6</sup>

### The Legal and Political Background to Dutch Participation in the Spanish American Trade

The relationship between the formerly deadly enemies, Spain and the Dutch Republic, began to thaw after the Peace of Münster and Treaty of Westphalia (both in 1648), and continued to improve after the Treaty of the Quadruple Alliance signed in 1673 in The Hague. The signing of the Treaty of Münster marked the beginning of a new era of Dutch-Spanish commercial cooperation, which was continued and expanded by the treaty of 1673.<sup>7</sup> These treaties helped the Dutch to build an institutional superstructure to protect their commercial interests in several Spanish ports as the most favored foreign nation. This, in turn, enabled Dutch entrepreneurs to travel to, and settle in, Spain so they could run their businesses themselves. The Treaty of Münster's eleventh article clearly stipulated that "the subjects and inhabitants of the territories ruled by Philip IV and by the States General will hold good correspondence and friendship, and are entitled to frequent, stay and reside in one another's country and there trade by sea or land with no hindrance or limitation."<sup>8</sup> Direct Dutch trade with the Spanish colonies in the Caribbean increased, and Dutch commercial firms grasped the business opportunities to be had in the Spanish Atlantic. Meanwhile, certain Spanish ports became factories for the Dutch redistribution traffic in Europe, Spanish America and the Mediterranean.

The treaties of 1648 and 1673 were explicit in terms of commercial cooperation and navigation. Signed in The Hague, these two treaties were designed to be advantageous to private mercantile interests while also ensuring that the Dutch had free access to the Andalusian regional market and to colonial exports. The stipulations were ambiguous because the Dutch were not allowed

6 For a discussion of the porous boundaries between Iberian and Dutch merchants in the early modern period, see Jessica Vance Roitman, *The Same But Different? Intercultural Trade and the Sephardim, 1595–1640* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

7 Miguel A. Echevarría Bacigalupe, "La cooperación económica hispano-holandesa 1637–1659," *Hispania* 187 (1994): 467–504.

8 Article 11 of the Treaty of Münster printed in Alejandro del Cantillo, *Tratados, convenios y declaraciones de paz y de comercio que han hecho con las potencias extrangeras los monarcas españoles desde el año 1700 hasta nuestros días* (Madrid: Imprenta de Alegria y Charlain, 1843), 390–400.

to trade directly with Spanish America but were only allowed to become involved in the colonial re-export trade from Andalusian factories.<sup>9</sup> With the Treaty of The Hague in 1673, the Dutch Republic succeeded in securing preferential treatment from Spain, a situation which would last until 1778, at which point internal politics and fierce competition from England and France jeopardized Hispano-Dutch relations.<sup>10</sup> Three new clauses were created in the treaties of 1648 and 1673. Customs officials in charge of smuggling would not visit Dutch ships at Spanish ports, the list of banned goods was reduced, and more flexibility was sought when dealing with cases of “trade with the enemy.”<sup>11</sup> The latter offense allowed the Spanish authorities to seize ship and cargo when there was suspicion of trade with countries with which Spain was at war. Traders charged with this crime could only buy their way out of the difficulty by paying a fine or *indulto* (pardon), as Abraham de Sadeler, a Jewish merchant from the Republic and consignee for the Amsterdam Admiralty, had to do in May 1693.<sup>12</sup>

In the decades after the establishment of these Spanish-Dutch treaties, a shift in the Republic's internal politics resulted in a closer relationship with England, especially after three consecutive Anglo-Dutch wars and the Nijmegen peace treaties in 1678. Nevertheless, a thriving trade between the United Provinces and Spain continued, partly due to war-related businesses such as shipbuilding and shipping supplies, as well as supplying salt.<sup>13</sup> During the war between the Dutch Republic and Portugal (1657–1660), the former lost access to the salt from Setubal and were able to turn to the salt mines in Western Andalusia as an alternative. Moreover, Dutch merchants proved to be shrewd intermediaries who took advantage of the political situation after the aforementioned treaties were signed. For instance, the Amsterdam Admiralty became involved in the arrangements for the Messina War (1674–1675) under the command of Admiral De Ruyter.

9 *Tratado ajustado de orden del Rey, Nuestro Señor: dada al señor embaxador Antonio Brun, sobre la materia de la navegacion y comercio, con las personas diputadas por los señores Estados Generales de las Provincias Vnidas del País Baxo* (city unnamed: Domingo García y Morrás, 1651); Manuel Herrero Sánchez, “La Monarquía Hispánica y el Tratado de La Haya de 1673,” in *V Coloquio Hispano-holandés de historiadores, Diálogos Hispánicos*, ed. J. Lechner and H. de Boer (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), 103–188, 105–110.

10 Ana Crespo Solana, *El comercio marítimo entre Amsterdam y Cádiz (1713–1778)* (Madrid: Banco de España, 2000).

11 Ibid., “Comercio con el enemigo”.

12 National Archives of the Netherlands, The Hague (hereafter NL-HaNA), Admiraliteitscolleges, 1.01.46, inv. no. 1884.

13 Ibid., 13 September 1692.

In 1672 the city of Messina, in Northeastern Sicily which was under Spanish rule, revolted against the Hispanic Monarchy. Messina was a key center for connections between the Western and Eastern Mediterranean as well as being a strategically important naval port. Spanish troops were sent to Palermo to crush the rebellion which was instigated in part by the French at the same time they had invaded the Netherlands. At that moment, the Hispanic monarchy was embroiled in a war against France, and the French were very interested in getting ahold of Messina. France made its claim legal on the basis of the short French presence in Sicily before the so-called “Sicilian Vespers” (1272). The Dutch were also keen to avoid the risk of French domination in the region. Therefore, the Dutch sent a fleet to Palermo to assist the Spanish against the French.<sup>14</sup>

In return for such services, the Spaniards would pay with salt as stipulated in a contract signed in Cádiz in 1679 – a contract that would be valid until 1715.<sup>15</sup> In the early autumn of 1678 the Amsterdam Admiralty extracted around 10,000 shiploads of salt as ballast.<sup>16</sup> The wool export business in the early eighteenth century also benefited from this new period of collaboration between the Dutch and the Spaniards.<sup>17</sup>

Between the Treaties of Münster and the first decades of the eighteenth century, the relations between both countries were mutually beneficial, even if there were ups and downs, which is not surprising as these relations were built upon the trade with vast markets in the Spanish empire and were also heavily influenced by fierce English and French competition. Commercial relations would only start to deteriorate from the 1740s, as Spanish institutions attempted to increase profits by appointing officers in charge of spot-checking Dutch merchandise for volume, inventory and profitability in the ports belonging to the customs perimeter.<sup>18</sup> Dutch merchants in Seville and Cádiz wanted to

14 See Luis Ribot, *La Monarquía de España y la Guerra de Mesina (1672–1678)* (Madrid: Editorial Actas, 2002).

15 Archivo Histórico Nacional de Madrid (AHNM), Estado, Libro 683, leg. 609, no. 234, “Consulta del Consejo de Estado relativa a otra del gobernador de Hacienda sobre los Almirantazgos de Holanda, sobre las salinas de Andalucía,” minuta s.f. (circa 1715).

16 NL-HaNA, Schonenberg, 1678–1702, 1.02.04, inv. nos. 24–32.

17 Carmen Sanz Ayán, “Las redes financieras franco-holandesas y la lana en el tránsito del siglo XVII al XVIII,” *El negocio de la lana en España*, ed. Agustín González Enciso (Madrid: 2001), 77–108.

18 See Hans S.A.M. van Koningsbrugge, “Tussen Mars en Mercurius: De Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden, Spanje en de Quadruple Alliantie,” in *Tussen Twee Culturen. De Nederlanden en de Iberische wereld, 1550–1800*, ed. P.J.A.N. Rietbergen, F.M.A. Robben, Hugo de Schepper (Nijmegen: Instituut voor Nieuwe Geschiedenis 1988), 39–70;

avoid paying this tax, and this led them to clash with their own consulates and resulted in subterfuge on a number of occasions.<sup>19</sup>

There was a prelude to the reforms of the 1740s. After the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714), the Spanish government attempted to strengthen the basic pillars of its monopoly, including implementing changes in port policies. Fiscal reforms were undertaken, most importantly centralizing the administration of the system of fleets, galleons and the navy in Cádiz. Between 1717 and 1726, the administrative institutions governing American commerce were moved to Cádiz, which became the headquarters of the monopoly. The relocation from Seville to Cádiz of the *Casa de la Contratación* (the Board of Trade that registered all ships, crews, equipment and merchandise bound for the Indies) and the *Consulado de Cargadores* (an association or guild of merchants) was an attempt by the Bourbon government to reinstate the monopoly as a business exclusive to the State. These attempts proved futile, also because these commercial institutions had already become obsolete due to bureaucratic incompetence and official corruption.<sup>20</sup>

As part of this over-arching reform effort, the monarchy tried to establish new laws designed to control the foreign share of the colonial trade. Laws against foreigners had a series of common objectives. Specifically, their main aim was to place under close scrutiny the commercial activities in the Americas of foreign merchants living in Spain. Although it was not the only reason for the reforms, the preponderance of foreigners trading out of Cádiz was one of the main arguments employed in order to encourage the government to step up the control of foreign merchants' activities in the city. There were a number of attempts to bring the economic activities of the foreigners under control. For instance, the *Junta de Dependencias de Extranjeros* was created in 1714 with the objective of overseeing foreign businesses in Spanish ports. The main functions of this agency were the appointment of consuls and other representatives, the surveillance of foreigners either living in Spain or staying there

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Ana Crespo Solana, "Implicaciones y consecuencias de las Pax Hollandesa: la República y el equilibrio hispano-británico (1702–1787)," in *El equilibrio de los imperios: de Utrecht a Trafalgar*, ed. Agustín Guimerá and Víctor Peralta (Madrid: Fundación Española de Historia Moderna, 2005), 101–119.

19 Archives Générales du Royaume, Belgium (AGRB), Secrétaire d'Etat et de Guerre, 675.

20 Ana Crespo Solana, *La Casa de la Contratación y la Intendencia General de Marina de Cádiz, 1717–1730* (Cádiz: University of Cádiz, 1996); Carlos Martínez Shaw, "Bourbon Reformism and Spanish colonial Trade, 1717–1778," in *Atlantic History: History of the Atlantic System, 1580–1830*, ed. Horst Pietschmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 375–387. Josep M. Delgado Ribas, *Dinámicas imperiales*

temporarily because of diplomatic privileges, and fiscal affairs related to taxes, as well as the provision of gifts granted by foreign merchants to the Spanish administration at some crucial junctures.<sup>21</sup> The design of new laws had a pragmatic character, as legislation served to both incorporate qualified immigrants into the Spanish administrative infrastructure, and to clarify the legal situation of foreigners, whose numbers had increased, particularly after the passage of pro-immigration legislation in 1716.<sup>22</sup> The *Junta de Dependencias* became a platform for the recovery of privileges that had been granted in the past to the various “nations” settled on Spanish soil.<sup>23</sup>

Even given the lack of any real institutional change, the reforms enacted which aimed to bring foreign trade under Spanish control did lead to conflicts and lawsuits against the so-called *jenízaros* (descendants of foreigners). Although many of the functions of the *Casa de la Contratación* became obsolete soon after the relocation of its headquarters to Cádiz, the newly created *Intendencia de Marina* (Navy Board) did function well in the preparation of the fleets in the first decades of the eighteenth century, and also managed to organize the register of ships in the 1740s.<sup>24</sup> The policies of the officials of the *Casa* and the *Intendencia* and the fiscal authorities in the port of Cádiz remained contradictory, as they simultaneously tried to control foreign merchants and to attract and support them in order to boost the Cádiz trade.

It is in this contradictory context that we should view the Dutch and Flemish merchants in Cádiz. But we also need to consider that much of the legislation designed to control foreigners did not affect the Flemish and Dutch in Cádiz at all, as a separate “Flemish nation” had long been recognized by the Spanish crown as citizens and subjects of the King of Spain, and, moreover, the privileges of

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(1650–1796). *España, América y Europa en el cambio institucional del sistema colonial español* (Barcelona: Ediciones Bellaterra, 2007).

- 21 J. Hidalgo Gonzalez, *Historia de las Dependencias de Extranjeros y Colección íntegra de los Reales Decretos. Resoluciones, Ordenes y Reglamentos que por punto general se han expedido para su gobierno y otras providencias que se hallaban incorporadas al Cuerpo de la Legislación* (Madrid: Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores (AHMAE), 1806), 3 vols.; Eugenio Larruga, *Historia de la Real Junta de Comercio, Moneda y Minas* (Madrid: n.p., 1798), 13 vols., vol. 3: Manuscrito (Mss.) Archivo del Ministerio de Hacienda (AMH), AHNM, Estado, bks. 222–223 (“Registros de las consultas de la Junta de Dependencias de Extranjeros”); Estado, bk 683.
- 22 AHNM. Estado 629, 1–3.
- 23 These new laws also led to censuses of the foreign population, but the results of these misrepresented the actual foreign population in Spanish cities. See Crespo Solana, “Merchants under close scrutiny.”
- 24 Crespo Solana, *La Casa de la Contratación*, 34–40.

the treaties of 1648 and 1673 remained valid. The particular status of the Flemish and Dutch in Spanish cities can obviously be traced back to the structure of the Habsburg empire prior to the Dutch Revolt starting in 1568. The Flemish part of the Habsburg Low Countries, and particularly the cities of Bruges and Antwerp, entertained strong economic relations with the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>25</sup> Flemish migration to Spain was tolerated as many of these immigrants were merchants. These merchants may have been viewed with some suspicion after the start of the Dutch Revolt, but their presence continued to be accepted as they were clearly contributing to the prosperity of the cities where they settled.

Immigrant “colonies” of merchants in Spanish cities had their own internal organization and identity, regarding themselves as a separate “nation,” with distinct legal, administrative, linguistic and religious characteristics. The “Flemish Nation,”<sup>26</sup> and foreign nations in general, were characterized by such criteria rather than by nineteenth-century territorial and judicial conceptualizations.<sup>27</sup> This early modern concept of “nation” referred to a sort of corporation, as is seen in the documents sent by the Flemish nation to the *Junta de Dependencias de Extranjeros*.<sup>28</sup> Strong blood ties and common interests further defined the nation. Trust-based relations were the norm and the shared conception of belonging to a common nation was the basis of a strong inner cohesion. Good relations between the earliest members and the rest of the group, including their often highly mobile representatives, were of vital importance.<sup>29</sup>

The Flemish community was well-integrated into Spanish society and was relatively large. They had their own charter of privileges and exemptions and were known as the “ancient and noble Flemish nation.”<sup>30</sup> This body boasted its

25 Raymond Fagel, “Spanish Merchants in the Low Countries: *Stabilitas Loci* or *Peregrinatio*?,” in *International Trade in the Low Countries (14th–16th centuries): Merchants, Organisation, Infrastructure*, Proceedings of the International Conference, Ghent-Antwerp, 12–13 January 1997, ed. Peter Stabel, Bruno Blondé and Anke Greve (Leuven and Apeldoorn: Garant), 87–104.

26 This documentation can be found in the Archivo Diocesano de Cádiz (ADC).

27 K.E. Spierling and M.J. Halvorson, *Definitions of Community in Early Modern Europe* (London: Ashgate, 2008).

28 AHNM, Estado 623, 2, expediente 532.

29 Frédéric Mauro, “Merchant Communities, 1350–1750,” in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350–1750*, ed. James D. Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 255–286, 264; Ana Crespo Solana, “Elementos de transnacionalidad en el comercio flamenco-holandés en Europa y la Monarquía Hispánica,” *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna. Anejos* 10 (2011): 55–76.

30 Ana Crespo Solana, *Entre Cádiz y los Países Bajos: una comunidad mercantil en la ciudad de la Ilustración* (Cádiz: Fundación Municipal de Cultura, Cátedra Adolfo de Castro, 2001), 112.

own consulate and confraternity, the Brotherhood of Saint Andrew (*Capilla de San Andrés de los Flamencos*),<sup>31</sup> while the Dutch Republic had only a small consulate.<sup>32</sup> Hence, most migrants from the Northern provinces, the new Dutch Republic, preferred to join the Flemish nation. Their affiliation with this body granted them Hispano-Flemish citizenship, assured that they were assumed to be Catholic and made them, therefore, subject to the Spanish king but also entitled to privileges and legal representation before the local authorities.<sup>33</sup> Affiliation with the Flemish nation also brought a respectable status and economic benefits, as most of these Dutch citizens operated as consignees for merchandise shipped under the name of Flemish merchants.<sup>34</sup>

### Immigration of Dutch to Spain over Time

What was the scale of the migration of these communities? Historian J.G. Briels noted that by the end of the sixteenth century, around 80,000 families in the war-torn Southern provinces of the Netherlands left for Spain and Portugal.<sup>35</sup> Many of these immigrants settled in Spain's port cities, often as merchants. The businesses set up by immigrant traders from Brabant and Flanders helped stimulate economic growth in areas within the Kingdom of Castile, but considerable numbers settled in Seville, the gateway to trade with the Spanish Americas.<sup>36</sup>

This well-organized community continued to attract new immigrants from the Low Countries. A sample taken from notarial sources shows that migration

31 Ibid., 129. See also Ana Crespo Solana, "Trusteeship and Cooperation in the Flemish merchants community in Cádiz: the brotherhood of San Andrés de los Flamencos (17th–18th centuries)," *Journal of Arts and Humanities* 2, no. 3 (2013): 1–13.

32 Crespo Solana, *Entre Cádiz*, 129.

33 Ibid., 133–140. Ana Crespo Solana and Vicente Montojo Montojo, "La Junta de Dependencias de Extranjeros (1714–1718): Trasfondo socio-político de una historia institucional," *Hispania. Revista Española de Historia* 69, no. 232 (2009): 363–394.

34 Ana Crespo Solana, *Mercaderes Atlánticos: redes del comercio flamenco y holandés entre Europa y el Caribe* (Córdoba: Servicio de Publicaciones, University of Córdoba, 2009), 106–117.

35 J.G.C.A. Briels, *Zuid-Nederlandse immigratie, 1572–1630* (Haarlem: Fibula-Van Dishoeck, 1978).

36 Eddy Stols, *De Spaanse Brabanders of de handelsbetrekkingen der Zuidelijke Nederlanden met de Iberische wereld, 1598–1648* (Brussel: Palais der Academiën, 1971), 2 vols.; Raymond Fagel, *De Hispano-Vlaamse wereld. De contacten tussen Spanjaarden en Nederlanders, 1496–1555* (Brussel and Nijmegen: Archief en Bibliotheekwezen in België, 1996).



to Cádiz rose in the 1660s, with a sharp increase between 1710 and 1740 and came to an almost a complete halt after that.<sup>37</sup> The initial spurt is logical given that the peace treaties signed in 1648 allowed for this migration. According to their wills, migrants came from a variety of locations. Between 1650 and 1699, 25 percent were from Flanders and 48 percent from Brabant. A minority had come from Holland (14.5 percent), Zeeland (0.5 percent) or other provinces such as Overijssel and North-Holland (12 percent). The Northern provinces of the Low Countries had been a preferred destination for thousands of merchants fleeing the Southern Low Countries during the Dutch Revolt, and ironically descendants of these refugees were now sent to Spain to apprentice in the merchant houses dedicated to the Atlantic trade. After 1700, the geographic distribution of people who left for Cádiz changed, with more migrants from Holland and Zeeland (24 percent) and fewer from Brabant (29 percent). Of the 41 percent of migrants claiming to be from Flanders, many were likely from other places in the Low Countries.

The “Flemish” community in Cádiz became very large and quite diverse. Around 1720, over 600 Dutch family names were to be found in Cádiz. Almost 65 percent of these names relate to Flanders and Brabant, but there were also a large number of transient traders (*“transeuntes”*) born in Amsterdam, Haarlem, Oudewater or Middelburg. The rest were Flemish families with a longer pedigree in Andalusian port cities focused on the trade with America such as Seville and Málaga who had then relocated to Cádiz in order to continue trading with the Americas. Diversity arising from regional background had to be muted. As other “nations,” the Flemish-Dutch community needed to maintain internal social cohesion even while striving for integration into the society of Cádiz.<sup>38</sup>

In the 1713 census taken in Cádiz, some of these Dutch merchants appeared as naturalized members of the Flemish nation.<sup>39</sup> However, only 26 out of the 152 merchants identified from the notarial protocols appear in the census. Many of them had settled in Cádiz only temporarily. Moreover, we know of the arrival of quite a few new migrants after 1713 due to their appearance in the business contracts drafted in the 1720s. Many of the families appearing in contracts were long established in Cádiz – such as the Van Kessel, Coghén

37 Crespo Solana, *Mercaderes Atlánticos*, 115.

38 Ana Crespo Solana, “Dutch mercantile networks and the trade with Hispanic Port Cities in the Atlantic (1648–1778),” in *Redes y comercio en el mundo ibérico, siglos XVI–XIX*, ed. Bernd Hausberger and Nikoalus Böttcher, (Frankfurt am Main and Madrid: Vervuert/Iberoamericana/El Colegio de México, 2011), 107–144.

39 Archivo Histórico Municipal de Cádiz (AHMC) Padrón de 1713, no. 1003.

and Montefrio, Conique, Snellincq, Hercq, and Vandentrille. Their members worked for firms with a presence in Cádiz dating back at least two generations. Amongst the best-known merchants were the Conique brothers, Juan Agustin and Andres Ignacio, who had commercial dealings with Santiago de Cuba, Cartagena de Indias and some ports in Nueva España.<sup>40</sup>

It was very common for these families to support Dutch and Flemish immigrants arriving in Cádiz to try their hand in the trading world. Some of these would begin their training working for well-established companies, some would also integrate into the nation through a fortunate marriage. Such was the case of Juan Baptista Coppenoll, who began his career as a servant in Nicolás Snellincq's house and founded his own firm around 1715 when he married Nicolas' daughter, Isabel Maria. By 1717, Juan Baptista was already running a very profitable company independently from his father-in-law and hired another traveling agent from Amsterdam by the name of Jan van der Slotten.<sup>41</sup> All of which shows that immigration and family networks made it possible for individual traders and members of the Flemish nation to take part in colonial trade, despite the appearance of exclusion from this very trade.

### Trade with the Americas by the Dutch and Flemish Based in Cádiz

An interesting paradox arises in the functioning of Cádiz as the seat of the *Casa de la Contratación* after 1717. The city became the metropolitan hub in the global Spanish empire. Cádiz was the place where foreign merchants should be monitored, but, at the same time, these merchants could freely live and trade there. As a center of multilateral trade, Cádiz facilitated cross-boundary exchanges transcending the immediate interests of the Spanish state.

Cádiz was both a port city and a derivatives market. According to historians such as Clé Lesger, this double functionality turns a region into a "Gateway System," that is a node within an integrated economic spatial system where external trade is conducted through specialized middlemen. The Cádiz market developed oligopsonic characteristics, in which very few traders had a great deal of power in the market, and a small elite group of buyers exercised maximum control over prices and the amount of products to be made available on

40 Archivo Histórico Provincial de Cádiz (AHPC) p.n. 9/1585, fols. 267–73v.

41 AHPC. p.n. 5/991, fol. 26–31v.

the market. Under such conditions, profits tend to be concentrated with the buyers rather than with the producers.<sup>42</sup>

This situation may be observed in the functioning of Cádiz as the center of an illicit market in silver. This market was controlled by foreign merchant colonies holding a virtual oligopoly on the Spanish West Indies trade. Dutch merchants were strongly represented in the oligopolistic networks structuring this complex market. The richest and most powerful businessmen monopolized the black market in metals, predominantly foreigners, non-resident agents involved in the purchase and sale of products in exchange for silver. Most of those middlemen were related to each other. Such traders would fix market prices, undercutting the official price of silver. In order to conduct this contraband trade, they had to employ legal strategies to feign legality. These strategies skirted what was allowed by the law and exploited the ambiguity in extant legislation. The Dutch and Flemish role was particularly visible because traders from this “nation” settled in Seville and Cádiz extended their networks all over the Spanish empire, thanks to their ability to create networks and adapt to the social, economic, and political environment.<sup>43</sup>

For this reason, foreign and particularly Flemish-Dutch merchants were not unhappy with the Spanish monopoly but, rather, its most eager supporters. They functioned as well-positioned intermediaries in a market with both oligopsonic and oligopolic features. A society such as Cádiz, with a substantial illicit trade component, needed discrete cooperation among the various parties. This was not incompatible with competition among the various networks focused on the different market areas and centered in diverse financial centers. To understand the role of Cádiz as a “nodal point” and the Dutch component in it, we need to consider the oligopsonic nature of the market in Cádiz with its high number of illegal silver traders, as well as the Dutch and Flemish merchants’ role as storekeepers and consignees.

Owing to their role as goods suppliers and their impressive merchant fleet, the Dutch were able to use many non-Dutch Atlantic ports as “nodal points.”

42 Pilar Nogués-Marco, *Did Bullionism matter? Evidence from Cádiz shadow market for Silver, 1729–1741*, Primer Encuentro Anual de la AEHE, Barcelona, September 2009 [http://www.aehe.net/2009/07/nogues\\_did-bullionism-matter.pdf](http://www.aehe.net/2009/07/nogues_did-bullionism-matter.pdf), and by the same author, *Tipos de cambio y tipos de interés en Cádiz en el siglo XVIII (1729–1788)* (Madrid: Banco de España, Estudios de Historia Económica, 2010), 58.

43 Ana Crespo Solana, “Legal Strategies and Smuggling Mechanisms in the Trade with the Hispanic Caribbean by Foreign Merchants in Cádiz: the Dutch and Flemish Case, 1680–1750,” *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas/Anuario de América Latina* 47 (2010): 181–314.

The presence of Dutch fleets was felt in a great number of port cities throughout the Hispanic world, in the Iberian peninsula as well as in American ports. We cannot yet quantify the volume of business of Amsterdam firms through their networks of correspondents and branches established by the Dutch and Flemish community in Cádiz. But we know for certain that one of the most important incentives for these ships, merchants and cargoes to call in at Cádiz was American silver, a commodity that fuelled many European businesses. At the turn of the eighteenth century, Cádiz was one of the most attractive places for obtaining silver in a semi-legal way, and much of this trade ended up in the Dutch Republic, even if the French and British shares were higher.<sup>44</sup> Conversely, Cádiz was Amsterdam's most important silver provider.<sup>45</sup>

The presence of Dutch businesses in the ports of Southern Spain, especially Cádiz, Seville and Málaga, should then be understood in the context of long-standing relationships facilitated by the Flemish nation in Cádiz. This long-standing network linked Andalusia with the East, and with the Hispanic Atlantic, a system geared towards accessing the flow of silver pouring in from the Americas.<sup>46</sup> Dutch commercial firms based particularly in Amsterdam sent their agents to Cádiz, the *de facto* headquarters of American trade, and Dutch ships plying the Amsterdam-Cádiz route were diverted off to the American territories from as early as 1690. Thus Haarlem-born Martín Guillermo Van Hemert traveled to Cádiz as consignee for the Mediterranean fleet. He admitted to having sent a Dutch vessel to Veracruz as a registered ship in the Indies fleet because he could not send it to the Levant ports due to warfare. In his will, Van Hemert listed among his business activities "consignations, trusts and commissions from various persons, my correspondents, all of them from my neighbouring northern provinces."<sup>47</sup>

The Dutch and the Flemings played a significant role as the suppliers of shipbuilding materials and, on occasion, acted as *asentistas* and *factores* for

44 Ibidem; Manuel Bustos Rodríguez, *Cádiz en el sistema atlántico: la ciudad, sus comerciantes y la actividad mercantil (1650–1830)* (Madrid: Sílex, 2005), 245.

45 Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure and Preseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 487.

46 Ana Crespo Solana, "The Iberian Peninsula in the First Global Trade. Geostrategy and Mercantile Network interests (XV to XVIII centuries)," in *Global Trade Before Globalization (VIII–XVIII)*, ed. Federico Mayor Zaragoza (Madrid: Fundación Cultura de Paz, 2007), 103–127.

47 AHPC, notarial archives 9/1578, 514. Van Hemert passed away in Cádiz in 1715: "consignaciones, confianzas, y comisiones de varias personas, mis correspondientes, todos ellos mis vecinos de las Provincias del Norte" (sic, original in Spanish).

the *Intendencia de Marina*. Ships were built in Cantabrian shipyards with supplies from these agents.<sup>48</sup> Even Spanish Prime Minister José Patiño benefited from their services. Once the naval boards and tribunals relocated to Cádiz, shipping and trade made Cádiz a depot for the re-export of goods. Its location and financial services gave Cádiz added value as a secondary market for derivatives, futures and options, albeit as a subsidiary of the major derivatives markets from Northern Europe, such as Amsterdam.<sup>49</sup>

The Flemish nation, then, could not be in a better position to exploit the position of its members as citizens of the Spanish monarchy and their perceived creditworthiness as merchants, in order to benefit from the Spanish American trade in Cádiz. The strong hierarchical structure characterizing the organization of the nation, centered around a few of the longest-resident families who formed a well-established élite, facilitated this perception of trustworthiness. These same families would welcome “temporary” immigrant agents for periods as long as over ten years. These agents worked mainly as consignees and carried most of the weight of their firm’s operations in the city.<sup>50</sup>

The role of the Dutch and Flemings was not limited to their activities based in the ports. The *Casa de la Contratación* also granted passenger licenses for Flemish and Dutch traders to travel to the Indies.<sup>51</sup> Such was the case of Colonel Juan Guillelmin from Zeeland, his Spanish wife, Maria de la Concepcion Valenzuela, and their two servants, Pedro Tosi from Barcelona and Guillermo Cornelio from Vic, who traveled to Santo Domingo.<sup>52</sup> And they were not the only ones. In 1710, Guillermo Tomas de Roo, a Dutch member of the Flemish nation,<sup>53</sup> sailed to Maracaibo with his family because he was

48 Ana Crespo Solana, “La acción de José Patiño en Cádiz y los proyectos navales de la Corona del siglo XVIII,” *Trocadero, Revista de Historia Moderna y Contemporánea* 6–7 (1994–1995): 35–49.

49 Maurius van Nieuwkerk, ed., *De Wisselbank. Van Stadssbank tot bank van de wereld* (Amsterdam: De Nederlandsche Bank; Arnhem: Sonsbeek Publishers; Amsterdam: Stichting Vereniging voor de Effectenhandel, 2009), 108–110; Clé Lesger, *The Rise of the Amsterdam Market and Information Exchange: Merchants, Commercial Expansion and Change in the Spatial Economy of the Low Countries, c. 1550–1630* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006).

50 Ana Crespo Solana, “Flandes y la expansión mercantil europea: origen y naturaleza de una red atlántica (siglos XV–XIX),” in *Flandes y Canarias. Nuestros orígenes nórdicos*, ed. M. de Paz Sánchez 3 vols., (La Laguna: Cabildo, 2007), 3:13–81.

51 AGI. Contratación 5527 N.4. R.7.

52 Crespo Solana, *Mercaderes Atlánticos*, 124.

53 Guillermo Tomás de Roo was born in Cádiz but his family was from Amsterdam. His father, Juan Baptista de Roo, arrived in Cádiz from Amsterdam in 1715. In Cádiz,

appointed governor and captain-general in Merida and La Grita.<sup>54</sup> There are other examples that provide information about different families and the kinship ties and business relations existing among them. One such example is Adriana van Kessel, widow of Juan Van Haure, who had dealings with Thomas Antonio Coghen y Montefrio, a close relative of the consul Jacobo Vermolen. Vermolen had issued Coghen y Montefrio's son, Juan Joseph, a *carta de emancipacion* and 1000 *doblonos* (around 4000 silver *pesos escudos*) on account of his inheritance, in 1723 when he was 24 years old. This enabled him to trade and do business on behalf of his family and using the family's assets inside and outside of Spain. This is an interesting example showing the use of the "letter of adulthood" to ensure the continuity of the family's businesses.<sup>55</sup>

Aside from these well-known, wealthy families there were many cases of Dutch enterprises linked to local Flemish and Dutch merchants in Cádiz, such as the firms of Eduardo Cornelis and Diego Van Haure, or that of the Van Hemert family from Amsterdam. The Van Hemerts were a family of textile manufacturers from Haarlem who had originally fled Antwerp, and they claimed to be Flemish in both their Spanish residences in Seville and Cádiz. Francisco Joseph and Gaspar Gregorio were born in Cádiz, and the latter sailed to New Spain on Fernando Chacón's fleet as his brother's agent or *encomendero* with the idea of becoming familiar with the American trade. At this time, the Van Hemerts had a family network that spread over a number of European and American port cities.<sup>56</sup>

This diversity of economic interests in both the Low Countries and in the Americas of these Cádiz-based Dutch families implied personal mobility. It was quite common for members of these families to travel for business purposes, at times to the Americas, more frequently to North Atlantic ports. An example is the case of the firm established in 1716 by Fernando Arroy, a member of the Flemish nation, and Ghent-born Juan Baptista Sholt. The latter arrived in Cádiz that same year and once his firm was fully established, he returned to Flanders in order to meet the commissions for his own firm in

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De Roo joined the "Flemish Nation" and he claimed to be Catholic. AHPC, p.n. 2/372, fol. 5. They established their business under the name of "Roo, Hercq and Vandentrille, co." AHPC, p.n. 9/5354.

54 AGI. Contratación 5796, L.I. fol. 315–17v. 20 January 1710.

55 AHPC. p.n. 23/5322, fol. 474–75v.

56 AHPC. p.n. 9/1583, fol. 324; and 9/1583, fol. 553–57v.; Margarita García-Mauriño Mundi, *La pugna entre el Consulado de Cádiz y los jenízaros por las exportaciones a Indias (1720–1765)* (Sevilla: University of Sevilla, 1992), 305–310; AGI, Contratación 5470 N.2. R. 160. 28 July 1720.

Spain.<sup>57</sup> In comparison to the merchants who joined the Flemish nation, there were very few who registered with the Dutch and, thereby, kept their “foreign charter.” In 1765, this registry comprised Octavio Barbour, Juan Lespinasse, Francisco Heegeman, Pedro Brack, Cornelio Van Linterlo, Juan Beumer, Constandio Albertini, Jose Pedro Heegeman and Miguel Woenigh.<sup>58</sup>

As was also previously mentioned, the number of transient traders was greater than that of the merchants permanently settled and operating under the umbrella of the Flemish nation, but their activities were very much alike. Perhaps the only difference between these two groups was the greater socio-economic prestige and prominence enjoyed by the latter in Cádiz. This differentiation becomes obvious when we study the wills and testaments collected throughout the years of the Cádiz-based trading families and their transient agents. Some of these families owned real estate in the city as well as in the countryside. Land ownership was generally associated with the privileged classes in Cádiz society. Such was the case of Ypres-born Francisco Henquel. He was the owner of estates in Rota and was related to the *regidores perpetuos* in Baeza (Jaen, Eastern Andalusia). At the beginning of the eighteenth century, he ran a firm with his nephew Juan Antonio Hendrix and was involved in the American trade. Guillermo de Graaf ran a salt supply business. He rented a salt mine and provided Esteban Van Uchelen with shiploads of salt as ballast for the return trips to Amsterdam.<sup>59</sup>

This importance of Cádiz was widely recognized at the time. Some political and economic thinkers and writers stressed the importance of Cádiz as a factory specifically for the Dutch. Jacques Le Moine de L'Espine stated that the Dutch had business in Bilbao, San Sebastián, Madrid, Seville and Cádiz, but most of the trade was run from Cádiz as this was a sea port open to the Atlantic Ocean, at the mouth of the Strait of Gibraltar, where all fleets and galleons for the Indies trade were arranged. This was the most profitable trade for all transient merchants and travelers in the area. For this reason, he wrote, a consulate had been created and the merchant colonies paid their dues in order to meet the costs of trading in the city.<sup>60</sup>

The general structure of these commercial arrangements did not change much in the early decades of the eighteenth century in comparison to the

57 AHPC. p.n. 5/991, fol. 84–85v. 7 March 1716.

58 Crespo Solana, *Mercaderes Atlánticos*, 122.

59 AHPC. p.n. 9/1583, fol. 1089–92v. Testament of Guillermo de Graaf, Cádiz, 16 December 1720. Incidentally, he was a relative of Juan Enrique de Graef, author of the *Discursos mercuriales económico-políticos*, 1752 (Madrid and Seville: Fundación el Monte, 1996).

60 Jacques Le Moine de L'Espine and Isaac Le Long, *De Koophandel van Amsterdam naar alle gewesten der wereld*, 2 vols. (Rotterdam: J. Bosch, et. al., 1780), 142.

second half of the previous century, but there were some modifications. Dutch fleets would export agricultural produce such as wine, olive oil, raisins, almonds and citrus fruits, and import into Spain grain from the Baltic, naval supplies, paper, linen goods, lard from Flanders, cheese, salted fish and fabrics, as well as indigo, ebony, painted canvas, both raw and patterned cotton, sugar, coffee and tea, porcelain, rolled cinnamon bales, and other goods for domestic consumption such as wheat and iron. Food-related goods were in high demand in Southern and Eastern Spain. There was also an increase in the number of fabrics and other commodities from Asia that were imported. Bernardo de Ulloa stated in 1740 that Asian spices brought by the Dutch were most sought after in Iberia and America. Spain's commercial lassitude meant that the Dutch became the main providers for certain products.<sup>61</sup>

The Dutch even took the liberty of introducing products either sourced from their own colonies or from the Spanish colonial territories into Spanish America. A clear and paradoxical example of this is cacao. A treatise composed by Cádiz traders explained that the cacao bought by the Dutch in Venezuela, stored in Amsterdam, and then shipped to Cádiz was cheaper to buy than that supplied by the *Compañía Guipuzcoana de Caracas*.<sup>62</sup> The Dutch also supplied Cádiz with tobacco from Barinas that had been purchased on the Venezuelan shores, despite the *Estanco del Tabaco* being in operation in Spain since 1636, which made it illegal to engage in any tobacco trade not under government license. And it was not only Cádiz from which the Dutch traded. They also arrived in a number of other Spanish ports, such as Málaga, Alicante, Barcelona or Bilbao. From these ports the Dutch would buy salt, indigo, wool, cochineal and, especially, precious metals.

The Dutch and Flemish trade in Cádiz was based on two fundamental pillars. The first was the trade of goods (*goederenhandel* or *warenhandel*), which consisted of the consignment of goods, as well as the storage or distribution of merchandise sourced from various markets. The second was the practice of depositing money to be used for financing the storage of produce, as well as for the payment of import goods from America destined for various ports in Northern Europe and vice-versa. Part of the cash stored would be used for investments such as private loans, and for selling and redistributing merchandise to the hinterland – Andalusia (4.5 percent), America (62 percent)

61 Bernardo de Ulloa, *Restablecimiento de las fábricas y comercio español* (1740) (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Fiscales, 1992), 91.

62 AGI Arribadas 12, "Memorial sobre el comercio del cacao que hacen los holandeses en Cádiz," 11 May 1728.



and the *Levantse Handel* (31 percent).<sup>63</sup> These two aspects were intrinsically related. They were essential for merchants involved in the American market, as they enabled them to store goods to be loaded in the fleets bound for New Spain as well as on the registered ships that set sail regularly to American ports around the Caribbean and the mainland. This broad functionality gave the Dutch and Flemish suppliers and merchants the opportunity to participate in various aspects of the American trade (storing merchandise from different sources and managing product purchases and sales) and the power to invest the cash necessary to fund business trips. This cash was funneled through instruments such as insurance policies.

The Dutch and the Flemings were also smugglers, but, to the naked eye, their trading activities appeared to be legal. The transient Dutch traders that operated as consignees for the Amsterdam and Middelburg Society of the Levant Trade (*Levantse Handel*)<sup>64</sup> used their connections among the Flemish merchants to introduce ships belonging to this society, under a new name, into the fleets bound for New Spain and other areas, especially the ports of Veracruz, Portobelo, Caracas and Buenos Aires. There is ample evidence for this, especially in the import and export deals conducted by Cádiz-based Dutch and Flemish merchants between 1714 and 1753.<sup>65</sup> This type of operation became the norm after 1740 on the registered ships. Between 1750 and 1760 a number of cases have been found demonstrating that smuggling depended on cross-national cooperation, even to the point that these illegal practices were, by and large, socially acceptable. There were a number of ways of solving any legal issues arising between the parties involved. It was apparently quite common for the port authorities to be well aware of, and approve of, what was being done. And it was hardly smuggling when the merchants involved were already entitled to trade with the Indies.

The documents relating to this trade, found in archives in Cádiz and Amsterdam, provide information on how these operations were conducted. The Amsterdam firm would grant proxies and send cash to their Cádiz partners, enabling them to introduce the ship in the fleet.<sup>66</sup> In addition, permission would be granted for other Cádiz merchants to load their merchandise, and further powers were issued so the products could be sold, although this was always to be done in the name of the Amsterdam correspondent.<sup>67</sup> On

63 Crespo Solana, "Dutch mercantile networks," 110.

64 NL-HaNA, *Levantse Handel*, 1.03.01, inv. nos. 173–75.

65 Crespo Solana, *El comercio marítimo*, 79–80.

66 AHPC, p.n. 23/5322, 456–460 (year 1743).

67 "om ze in West-Indie te verkopen ten behoere van Gaspar en Manuel Winjgaert." Wijngaert brothers to Gaspar de Conincq y co, Cádiz, Amsterdam, 31 January 1710. Goods were

several occasions these ships would sail under convoy by Spanish warships, especially when they traveled as single registered ships from various nationalities consigned to Flemish merchants. Such was the case of a Genoese vessel purchased by Henrique de Roo and Sons.<sup>68</sup> It is worth noting that these merchants displayed exemplarily correct behavior as they paid all taxes due for these transactions (the *alcabala* or sales tax as well as 4 percent towards the general income tax for the city), which underlines that the Spanish authorities were not at all ignorant of them.<sup>69</sup> In 1740, the increased use of loose register ships seemed to encourage merchants to create alliances to be able to load more merchandise – mainly manufactured goods – and thus profit from the increasing amounts of gold and silver arriving in Cádiz.

### Conclusion

To sum up, the share of locally-established foreign and particularly Flemish-Dutch merchants in Spain's commercial relations with the Americas not only continued in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but was strengthened. Though there were attempts to control the activities of foreigners, these served mainly as monopolistic window dressing and nothing more. There was little incentive to really exclude foreigners from the Atlantic trade, despite new monopoly legislation in the early eighteenth century. Everyone involved in the trade, from customs officials in the ports to the highest government ministers, knew that the trade conducted by foreigners was extremely beneficial to Spanish interest. This was nowhere clearer than in the nerve center for the conduct of trade with the Americas – Cádiz.

No matter what their origins were, the residents of Cádiz worked together to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the trade with the Americas. This cooperation included circumventing laws, committing fraud, and finding ways to smuggle contraband into and out of the port. The merchants involved were often acquainted with one another via ties of kinship, place of origin, and long-standing business partnerships. The "Carrera de Indias," the Spanish colonial trade with America, depended heavily on foreign merchant communities, as this case study of the Dutch/Flemish "Nation" in Cádiz strongly suggests. Through family ties and "nation"-based networks, Dutch and Flemish merchants were vital to the functioning of the Spanish trade to the Americas.

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consigned to Diego Alonso Toscano, Honduras, Amsterdam Municipal Archives (SAA), Notariele Archieven 2941/73 (translated by the author from the Dutch original).

68 AHPC, 23/5338, 140–146, AHPC, 23/5322, 456–460.

69 Ana María Galley, Captain Cornelio Leendertsz in 1743. AHPC, 9/1605, 299–300.

These conclusions support D.W. Meinig's hypothesis that the Dutch created a geographically fragmented Atlantic "empire" formed by a network of strategic nodal points along critical trade routes.<sup>70</sup> The city of Cádiz was crucial in these merchant networks because it connected Atlantic routes and market areas. Cádiz was a factory-port used by Dutch convoys for storing and redistributing products as well as for obtaining cash to fuel their businesses along the routes linking Southern Europe, the Mediterranean and Spanish America. The Dutch presence in Cádiz therefore is indicative of the importance of cross-imperial, cross-cultural trade in the early modern Atlantic.

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70 D.W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), vol. 1: *Atlantic America*, 62.

# A Public and Private Dutch West India Interest

*Henk den Heijer*

## Introduction

In the historiography, the term West India interest stands for a group of British stakeholders in the plantation economy in the Caribbean. That group emerged in the eighteenth century, and its objective was to forcefully defend the West Indian interests of the members in the British parliament. In her 1921 article “The London West India Interest in the Eighteenth Century,” Lilian Penson distinguished three London-based interest groups that decided to work together: agents from the West Indian colonies, merchants who traded with the colonies, and plantation owners who lived in the city. She describes how various stakeholders formed an effective lobby group after a successful campaign for the introduction of the Molasses Act in 1733. This lobby group managed to keep foreign plantation products from the British market via the parliament.<sup>1</sup> The image of a powerful, homogenous interest group was recently adjusted by Andrew O’Shaughnessy.<sup>2</sup> He demonstrated that the lobby was initially a fairly informally organized economic interest group, able to apply political pressure during the American Revolution, but that it also suffered from internal dissension. The interests of the group began to diverge more and more at the end of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless there was a lobby in Great Britain that managed to get the West Indian interest on the parliamentary agenda. Did the Dutch Republic have such an interest group, as well? Not according to J.P. van de Voort. In his dissertation on the West Indian plantation loans, he states that it was impossible for a Dutch West India interest to emerge, since the interests of such a pressure group were incompatible with the principles of an open staple market. A monopoly supply of plantation products from the colonies such as in Great Britain was unthinkable in the Republic, simply because the Dutch colonies could not meet the growing demand for sugar, coffee and other colonial products. Import from non-Dutch areas was necessary.<sup>3</sup>

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\* I would like to thank Dave Boone and Gerhard de Kok who did a part of the archival research for this article.

1 L.M. Penson, “The London West India Interest in the Eighteenth Century,” *English Historical Review* 30 (July 1921): 373–392, 374.

2 A.J. O’Shaughnessy, “The Formation of a Commercial Lobby: The West India Interest, British Colonial Policy and the American Revolution,” *Historical Journal* 40 (1997): 71–95.

3 J.P. van de Voort, *De Westindische plantages van 1720 tot 1795. Financiën en handel* (Eindhoven: De Witte, 1973), 27.

The key question in this chapter is whether or not the Republic had some sort of West India interest. Of course there have been individuals as well as organizations with West Indian interests, but around which subjects were they organized? Did these individuals and various groups collaborate and, if so, did that collaboration have similarities with that in Great Britain? A parallel seems hard to draw in advance; the significantly different state structure of the Republic will have affected the interests of various groups. The fragmented governance structure that was so characteristic to the Republic did not exist in Great Britain.<sup>4</sup> This chapter begins with the West Indian interests of the central government and then discusses the conflicts of interest between the provinces of Holland and Zeeland. Afterwards, we will shed light on how interest groups emerged at a local level in the Republic and how they defended their interests. Finally, we will discuss the alleged differences between the Republic and Great Britain and the role the States General played in balancing the different Atlantic interests in the Republic.

### Private Interest as State Interest

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the economic interests of Dutch merchants in the Atlantic were still modest. During the initial phase, the Republic had few to no planters overseas, nor sugar refiners at home. In 1609 a group of merchants submitted a petition to the States General for the first time, requesting protection of their trade interests in West Africa.<sup>5</sup> The reason for this was that their ships were continuously being attacked by the Portuguese. Around 1600, however, it was not private interests but rather government interests of a military nature that rapidly sucked the Dutch into the Atlantic. The States General had been making efforts to relocate the battle against Spain from land to sea and from Europe to regions outside of Europe since the end of the sixteenth century. It was mainly the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in

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4 Not only the government but also private organizations with interests overseas had decentralized governance structures. The Dutch West India Company (WIC), for instance, had a so-called chamber structure which reflected the economic and political hierarchy of several towns within the Dutch Republic. H. den Heijer, *Geschiedenis van de WIC. Opkomst, bloei en ondergang* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2013), 27.

5 J.K.J. de Jonge, *De oorsprong van Neerland's bezittingen op de kust van Guinea, in herinnering gebracht uit de oorspronkelijke stukken, naar aanleiding van een voorgenomen afstand dier bezittingen aan Groot-Brittannië* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1871), 33–39.

the Atlantic that generated the capital with which the battle against the Republic was funded, and these territories, therefore, formed interesting targets for the Dutch. However, the government had no financial resources to fight this battle on its own, and resorted to private investors at a very early stage. The enormous war fleet of Pieter van der Does that carried out attacks on the Canary Islands and São Tomé in 1599 was such a public-private enterprise, whose main objective was military in nature. Eventually, this joint venture culminated in the establishment of the West India Company (WIC) in 1621, a private company with commercial and military goals. The charter of the Company stated that, in case of war overseas, it could count on financial and material support from the government.<sup>6</sup> In the first half of the seventeenth century, during which the WIC unsuccessfully attempted to build an Atlantic empire, the States General provided support by means of money, war ships and troops several times.

After the end of the Revolt against Spain in 1648, there was no reason to continue the battle in the Atlantic. Meanwhile, the economic interests of the Dutch in the Atlantic had increased significantly. Colonies had been established and the supply and processing of, and trade in, plantation products such as sugar and tobacco became increasingly important for the Dutch economy. This also significantly changed the nature of the Atlantic interest of the government. From the mid-seventeenth century until the end of the eighteenth century, the roles were reversed and the military actions in the Atlantic were primarily in the service of the economic interests of private organizations. For instance, the States General sent Michiel de Ruyter to West Africa in 1664 to recapture the WIC forts, which had previously been captured by the English. The expedition of Abraham Crijnssen to the West Indies organized in 1667 by the Admiralty of Zeeland, and in which Crijnssen captured Suriname, fit in this policy as well. The trade in, and processing of, plantation products had become too important to the Republic not to defend. In addition to profit for merchants, sugar, tobacco and other products also provided employment. After all, almost all Atlantic products had to be processed, which created many jobs. Amsterdam and Rotterdam had dozens of sugar refineries and tobacco mills within their walls. For the survival of these companies, not to mention to ensure their continued success, the supply of raw materials from the Atlantic was essential. After the WIC had been forced to give up its imperial ambitions with the loss of Brazil in 1654, the Company had the task of managing

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6 Octroy, by de Hooge Mogende Heeren Staten Generael, verleent aende West-Indische Compaignie in date den derden Juni 1621 ('s-Gravenhage: Hillebrant Jacobssz, 1621), articles 11–12.

the remaining infrastructure in the Atlantic, allowing production and trade to be continued. When the Company threatened to collapse under the burden of debt in 1674, the States General decided to reorganize the Company financially, allowing it to restart.<sup>7</sup> It was simply unthinkable for the government, with its limited resources, to manage these overseas possessions itself.

In addition to the WIC, there were other private organizations that managed Dutch possessions in the Atlantic. They were established with the permission of – and sometimes even initiated by – the government. That is how, in the 1620s, private colonies emerged under so-called *patroonships*.<sup>8</sup> Most of these organizations existed only briefly, but some of them had a longer lifespan, such as Tobago, which was a *patroonship* with alternating owners between 1628 until 1677.<sup>9</sup> In 1683, the Society of Suriname had been established, in which the WIC, the city of Amsterdam and the Van Sommelsdijk family each owned a third. Both societies had been granted a patent by the States General, which not only granted rights to these individual organizations, but also required them to protect the possessions of the societies in times of trouble. Eventually the WIC, the *patroonships* and the societies were mandated by the government to rule overseas regions and to run the judicial system there on its behalf. On paper, however, the States General were ultimately responsible for the governance, the application of the judicial system and the safety of the colonies.<sup>10</sup> For these individual organizations, this was a reason to turn to the government for military support when needed. The WIC even had a so-called “*Haags Besogne*,” a semi-permanent consultative body of directors and delegates of the States General, to exchange information and represent their interests.<sup>11</sup> The fact that the government had an

7 H. den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven. Scheepvaart en handel van de Tweede Westindische Compagnie op Afrika, 1674–1740* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1997), 39–49.

8 G.J. van Grol, *De grondpolitiek in het West-Indische domein der Generaliteit*, two parts in one volume (Amsterdam: Emmering, 1980), 2:24–25.

9 Another example is the plantation colony of Berbice. The Zeeland merchant Abraham van Pere had established this colony on the Coast of Guiana in 1627 with the permission of the WIC and the States General. Until the beginning of the eighteenth century, this colony was owned by the Van Pere family. After the French privateer Jacques Cassard plundered the colony, the family was forced to sell Berbice to a group of Amsterdam merchants in 1714, who converted the ownership and governance of the plantation colony into the share-funded Society of Berbice in 1720.

10 The States General was the sovereign body of the Republic, but private organizations like the WIC and the societies had suzerain power over the colonies.

11 Den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven*, 51.

interest in the preservation of individual Atlantic organizations was evidenced by the fact that government support was frequently granted. For instance, in 1674, the WIC received a guarantee from the States General that it would pay the costs for 200 soldiers every year, an amount that was allocated to all provinces via the then current repartition system.<sup>12</sup> The patroonships and societies could count on support as well. The Society of Suriname was given access to state army troops twice in the eighteenth century, for the purpose of disabling the maroons in the colony. And in Berbice, State troops were deployed in 1764 to put an end to the slave revolt that was threatening the existence of the colony.

It would be incorrect to assume that the fragmented government of the Republic granted support to Atlantic organizations without conditions. Even within the States General, there were significant conflicts of interest between the sea and land provinces. The latter had fewer economic ties with the Atlantic than the sea provinces of Holland and Zeeland and often had a negative attitude towards supporting the WIC or the West Indian colonies. Representatives of the States of Holland and Zeeland often had to exert pressure on the land provinces to get financial support for the West Indian colonies. In addition, the States General required the Atlantic organizations to make significant financial contributions to keep the defense and the administration of their colonies up-to-date. But these organizations passed on the costs to the colonists to a large degree, resulting in protests and resistance. In Suriname and all other Dutch colonies in the West, conflicts between the government and the colonists about the payment for fortifications and troops led to a neglect of the defense of these territories. That neglect caused a fierce battle in the Patriot era about the governance and the defense of the Atlantic colonies.<sup>13</sup> After the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780–1784) and the temporary elimination of the

12 *Octroy, by de Hoogh Mogende Heeren Staten Generael, verleent aen de West-Indische Compagnie in date den twintighsten september seshien hondert vier en tseventigh* ('s-Gravenhage: Jacobus Scheltus, 1674), Article 39. Under the repartition system the costs of the States General were distributed among the provinces according to their ability to pay. In practice, Holland, the most prosperous province of the Republic, paid half of the subsidy. Initially, the WIC got a subsidy commitment for eight years, but, in practice, the subsidy was paid until the liquidation of the Company in 1791. National Archives of the Netherlands, The Hague, (hereafter NL-HaNA), Tweede West-Indische Compagnie (NWIC), 1.05.01.02, inv. nos. 268–271.

13 G.J. Schutte, *De Nederlandse Patriotten en de koloniën. Een onderzoek naar hun denkbelden en optreden, 1770–1800* (Groningen: Tjeenk Willink, 1974), 54–59. The Patriots were political newcomers without influence who wanted to reform the government. They revolted against the conservative Orangists, the ruling class who supported the Stadtholder.



Patriots, the States General sent two representatives, W.A.J. Grovestins and W.C. Boeij, to the West to put things in order.<sup>14</sup> Despite the tension that existed between the provinces, the States General, the Atlantic organizations and the colonies, there were always forms of collaboration that assured continuity, however unstable it sometimes may have been. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century, when the fragmented governance system in the Republic started to become unworkable, that the state took over the colonies and the private Atlantic organizations were eliminated.

The WIC and the societies were not the only ones who lobbied the States General for military protection. Groups of merchants did the same. A minority of the merchants was involved in the trade with Guiana but the majority had commercial ties with the Caribbean islands which were the sites of the most important trade of the entire Atlantic region. Via Curaçao and St. Eustatius, more tropical products of the English, French and Spanish colonies were shipped to the Republic than from the Dutch plantation colonies in Guiana. When the trade with the islands was threatened during the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748), groups of merchants from Amsterdam and Rotterdam launched actions to defend their interests. The Republic was officially neutral in the war, but treaties with Austria and Great Britain forced the States General to deploy state troops against the French in the Southern Netherlands in 1745. That development posed a serious threat to the Caribbean trade for several reasons.

For instance, the States General decided in 1747 that a third of the crew of merchant vessels had to serve on the war fleet that was to protect Dutch merchantmen from the attacks of the French navy in European waters.<sup>15</sup> That measure would seriously hamper Dutch intercontinental shipping and trade. That is why the directors of the Society of Suriname and Berbice protested, after which the States General exempted navigation to and from Guiana from this measure.<sup>16</sup> Merchants who traded with the Caribbean islands also joined forces and approached the States General via the directors of the WIC with the request to revoke these harmful measures for Caribbean shipping. The joint protest of the merchants was successful; the States General also exempted ships engaged in Caribbean navigation from providing crewmembers to the war fleet.<sup>17</sup>

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14 Ibid., 92.

15 I. Scheltus, ed., *Groot Placaatboek, vervattende de placaaften (...) van de Staaten Generaal* (...), 9 vols. ('-Gravenhage: Isaac Scheltus, 1779), 7:511, Placard 12 June 1747.

16 Ibid., 514, Placards 18 July and 3 August 1747.

17 NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 451, Gentlemen Ten to States General, 9 September 1747. Scheltus, *Groot Placaatboek*, 7:511, Placard 12 June 1747.

More harmful than this obligation to provide crew members was the measure that prohibited trade with France and her colonies.<sup>18</sup> Amsterdam and Rotterdam merchants who imported sugar and coffee via French ports were willing to accept this ban, but they refused to accept an import ban on French sugar via Curaçao and St. Eustatius. The latter would mean the end of their Atlantic trade. In a coordinated action, merchants and insurers from Amsterdam and Rotterdam submitted petitions to the States General to eliminate the ban that would “ruin the overall Dutch trade with the West.” These petitions were signed by 185 merchants, including influential regents with Atlantic trade interests.<sup>19</sup> This led to the decision of the States General to scale back the measure. Ships that were en route from the Caribbean with French products were given free admission to Dutch ports.<sup>20</sup>

Another issue for which the help of the government was asked was the protection of West Indiamen. Ships that sailed to the Caribbean were frequently the victims of privateers, despite the neutrality policy of the Republic during a large part of the eighteenth century. In the 1730s, the Spanish navy captured several Dutch merchantmen in the Caribbean on suspicion of smuggling to the Spanish colonies. At the instigation of the WIC, the Admiralty of Amsterdam sent one or two convoys to the West Indies per year after 1737 to protect merchants from Spanish confiscations.<sup>21</sup> But soon the convoy system was discarded by the Admiralty, despite protests from merchants who emphasized that – even without the threat of Spanish warships – the Caribbean Sea was a perfect area for privateers who did not stick to the rules and resorted to piracy. Ships carrying valuable loads of Atlantic products were appealing prey to them. In 1745, Amsterdam merchants submitted two petitions to the States General in which they requested protection against privateers. To the second petition, which was signed by 110 merchants, a list of 32 ships was added that had been confiscated by English and Spanish privateers. The merchants were supported by the Board of the WIC, which was not able to offer sufficient protection.<sup>22</sup> The States General took the petitions seriously, and commissioned

18 Scheltus, *Groot Placaatboek*, 7:499–503, Placard 5 December 1747.

19 NL-HaNA, Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv. no. 7809, Petitions 3 January 1748. Well-known regents like Thomas and Adriaan Hope, Abraham van Hoboken and Jacob and Adriaen Temminck were among the signatories.

20 Scheltus, *Groot Placaatboek*, Vol. 7, 504–505, Resolution 29 January 1748.

21 J.R. Bruijn, *De admiraliteit van Amsterdam in rustige jaren, 1713–1751. Regenten en financiën, schepen en zeevarenden* (Amsterdam/Haarlem: Scheltema & Holkema, 1970), 24–25.

22 NL-HaNA, Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv. no. 3800, Resolution 28 June 1745; NL-HaNA, Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv. no. 7800, Petition 8 October 1748; NL-HaNA, Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv. no. 3801, Resolution 16 April 1746.

the Admiralty of Amsterdam to restart the convoying of the West Indiamen. When, after several new ships were captured by privateers, it turned out that the frequency and effectiveness of convoying left much to be desired, the stakeholders proposed to the States General that an armed convoy to the West Indies be organized twice a year.

The States General granted that request in December 1747 “to indemnify the subjects of the State for damage with all resources possible.”<sup>23</sup> However, the convoy system fell apart once again due to the costs the Admiralty of Amsterdam had to incur to maintain it. During the Seven Years’ War (1756–1763) large groups of merchants were continuously bombarding the States General with petitions for the improvement of the convoy system, with varying degrees of success. In June 1758, the representatives of the States General, in an action that was very likely coordinated, received six petitions signed by no fewer than 650 merchants from several cities in the Republic.<sup>24</sup> All these petitions demonstrate that merchants were continuously working together to defend their West Indian trade interests via the States General. The States General, in turn, was usually willing to grant these requests; after all, they also had an interest in the continuity of Atlantic shipping and trade, even if the financial resources they could provide were limited.

### Conflicting Interests: Monopoly versus Free Trade

Based on enlightened self-interest, the States General supported various private organizations and merchants who were active in the Atlantic region. Only then could the economic interests of the country best be served. However, the problem was that the Atlantic interests of the provinces and cities in the States General could differ significantly. These diverging interests led to a fierce conflict of interest between Zeeland and Holland several times. The Zeeland merchants lost more and more ground to Holland, and, particularly, to Amsterdam, in European shipping and trade over the course of the seventeenth century and wanted to make sure that the same would not happen in the Atlantic. An important point of conflict, which both parties tried to settle in varying ways within and outside the States General, was the question of whether or not the trade monopoly of the WIC should be preserved in certain parts of its mandate area.

23 NL-HaNA, Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv. no. 3802, Resolutions 26 October and 1 December 1747.

24 NL-HaNA, Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv. no. 7848, Petitions of merchants, 1 June 1758.

Initially, the Zeelanders were in favor of preservation of the Company monopoly, which guaranteed them that a portion of the Atlantic trade would remain in Zeeland's hands.<sup>25</sup> The first test case was the Dutch colony in Brazil. Almost immediately after the occupation of Recife in 1630, Amsterdam merchants fought for free trade with Brazil, which was the most important sugar producing region in the world. Amsterdam had growing interests in sugar refining and the sugar trade and aimed to acquire the largest possible share of the available sugar. The battle that erupted within the WIC between Amsterdam and Zeeland about the opening up of the sugar trade was temporarily won by Amsterdam in the fall of 1630. The States General allowed free trade, provided that all goods were shipped from and to Brazil using Company ships and the WIC would receive a fee and shipping costs. In 1634, the rules on free trade were loosened which allowed the Amsterdam merchants to gain control over a large portion of the sugar trade.<sup>26</sup> The timing was not coincidental, since at that moment the power of the Company in Northeast Brazil had increased significantly and the colony began to produce more sugar. In its wake, the battle about monopoly versus free trade flared as well. Supporters and opponents of the monopoly published dozens of pamphlets in which they tried to sway public opinion of the reasonableness of their views.<sup>27</sup>

In 1636, resistance against free trade grew, including within the Company, and the directors of the Chamber of Zeeland were able to stir up resistance against Amsterdam. Eventually, in late December 1636, the States General decided to restore the Company monopoly and free trade was banned immediately.<sup>28</sup> It seemed that Zeeland had won the battle, but this victory was only a mirage. A publicity offensive was launched against the reinstatement of the monopoly by Amsterdam. In addition, Amsterdam also applied political pressure within the States of Holland and the States General. From Dutch Brazil, the merchants of Amsterdam were supported by no less than

25 Zeeland had a 2/9 share in the WIC, which determined that 2/9 of the shipping and trade of the company was done by the Chamber of Zeeland.

26 *Articulen (...) over het open ende vry stellen van den handel en negotie op de stadt Olinda de Pernambuco, ende custen van Brasil* (Amsterdam: Paulus Aerts van Ravesteijn, 1630); C.R. Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil, 1624–1654* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957), 75–76.

27 G.M. Asher, *A Bibliographical and Historical Essay on the Dutch Books and Pamphlets Relating to New Netherland and to the Dutch West-India Company and its Possessions in Brazil, Angola etc.* (Amsterdam: Israel, 1966), 135–138; H. den Heijer, "Het recht van de sterkste in de polder. Politieke en economische strijd tussen Amsterdam en Zeeland over de kwestie Brazilië, 1630–1654," in *Harmonie in Holland. Het poldermodel van 1500 tot nu*, ed. D. Bos, M. Ebben and H. te Velde (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2007), 79–84.

28 Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil*, 78.

Governor-General Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, who was convinced that the colony would only be able to flourish with free trade.<sup>29</sup> After a year-long battle between Zeeland and Amsterdam, the States General decided on 29 April 1638 to partially dismantle the monopoly of the Company for the second time.<sup>30</sup> Only the slave trade remained a privilege of the WIC. With this decision, the ban on individual trade initiated by Zeeland in 1636 turned out to be a Pyrrhic victory. The West Indian interests of Holland, in particular of the economically strong Amsterdam, carried more political weight and would eventually be the decisive factor in the free trade debate.<sup>31</sup>

After the loss of Brazil in 1654, conflicts between the provinces of Zeeland and Holland about shipping and trade in the Atlantic kept arising. In the late 1720s, those conflicts would once again lead to a fierce battle between Amsterdam and Zeeland. However, this time the roles were reversed and the directors of the Chamber of Amsterdam defended the last monopoly of the Company: the trade and shipping to West Africa and the associated slave trade in the Dutch colonies in America. The reason for the conflict was the illegal commodity and slave trade of the Zeelanders in West Africa. In response to the structural loss of trade activities within Europe to merchants in Holland, the Zeelanders had focused on risky shipping branches such as privateering and smuggling, activities the merchants of Holland hardly engaged in. Privateering by Zeelanders was done in times of war and smuggling in times of peace.<sup>32</sup> Zeeland interlopers who dispatched ships to Africa always ran the risk of having their ships captured and confiscated by the WIC. That is why the Council of Middelburg was already urging the abolition of the Company's trade monopoly with West Africa in 1692. The directors of the WIC unanimously rejected

29 A. Bick, *Governing the Free Sea: the Dutch West India Company and Commercial Politics, 1618–1645* (unpublished PhD diss., Princeton University, 2012), 200–204.

30 *Reglement byde West-Indische Compagnie (...) over het open-stellen vanden handel op Brazil* ('s-Gravenhage: Jacobssz van Wouw, 1638).

31 Den Heijer, "Het recht van de sterkste," 72–92.

32 Privateering activities are researched by F. Binder, "Die Zeeländische Kaperfahrt, 1654–1662," in *Archief. Mededelingen van het Koninklijk Zeeuwsch Genootschap der Wetenschappen* (1976), 40–92, J. Francke, *Utiliteyt voor de gemeene saake. De Zeeuwse commissievaart en haar achterban tijdens de Negenjarige Oorlog, 1688–1697* (Middelburg: Koninklijk Zeeuws Genootschap der Wetenschappen, 2001) and J.Th.H. Verhees-van Meer, *De Zeeuwse kaapvaart tijdens de Spaanse Successieoorlog, 1702–1713* (Middelburg: Koninklijk Zeeuws Genootschap der Wetenschappen, 1986), while smuggling is researched by R. Paesie, *Lorrendrayen op Africa. De illegale goederen- en slavenhandel op West-Afrika tijdens het achttiende-eeuwse handelsmonopolie van de West-Indische Compagnie, 1700–1734* (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 2008).

Middelburg's proposal, and there were no changes in the monopoly.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, the organized illegal slave and commodity trade from Zeeland continued, in particular when, after the end of the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1713), privateering disappeared as a major source of income.

In 1716 Zeeland once again submitted a request to open up trade to West Africa. They referred to England as an example, where the Parliament had opened up the trade to West Africa in 1698. That decision had significantly boosted English trade in West Africa, including the slave trade. However, the directors of the Company did not like the proposal and unanimously rejected it, so illegal trade continued. In the years after the War of the Spanish Succession, not only did smuggling activities increase, but due to stricter inspections in West Africa, many Zeeland smuggling ships were confiscated as well. Between 1714 and 1725, 27 Zeeland interlopers were captured by Company cruisers, and the commerce of the province suffered over 1.7 million guilders in damages.<sup>34</sup> The West Indian interest of the Zeelanders was seriously threatened by the actions of the Company. Therefore, it is not surprising that it was the merchants of Zeeland who developed initiatives to dismantle the last monopoly of the WIC.

Several years before the States General had to decide on the renewal of the charter of the Company in 1730, the Zeelanders launched their attack on the monopoly. In the fall of 1727, a group of merchants from Vlissingen drafted a notice of objection, urging the full freeing up of the Atlantic trade. The merchants believed that the monopoly was seriously damaging the Dutch economy, since the WIC was not able to adequately conduct the commodity trade in West Africa, nor could it manage the slave trade. They estimated that, after the dissolution of the last Company monopoly, 50 ships a year would be dispatched from Zeeland to West Africa, including ships deployed for the slave trade.<sup>35</sup> The merchants of Vlissingen received support from a group of merchants from Middelburg, who established an almost identical proposal for liberalization of the trade. Both proposals were merged into one document by representatives of the City Councils of Middelburg and Vlissingen in 1728 and submitted to the States of Zeeland.<sup>36</sup>

After receipt of the document, the States of Zeeland appointed a committee that was to further develop the proposal to dismantle the Company monopoly

33 NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 656, Minutes 29 September 1692.

34 NL-HaNA, Radermacher, 1.10.69, inv. no. 596. List of ships from Zeeland confiscated by the WIC.

35 NL-HaNA, Verspreide West-Indische Stukken, 1.05.06, inv. no. 904. Short account.

36 Zeeuws Archief (ZA), Archief Staten van Zeeland (SvZ) 325, Resolution 30 November 1728.

in the States General. The Zeeland plan to change the charter would soon also be known in Amsterdam. It immediately provoked a counter attack for the preservation of the monopoly. Directors of the Amsterdam Chamber believed that opening up trade in West Africa would mean the fall of the WIC. The tax income would be insufficient to cover the costs of forts and factories.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the Amsterdam directors did not trust the Zeeland stakeholders in the Atlantic trade. They had partaken in smuggling activities on a large scale and would not shy away from evading tax on the trade in Africa in the future as well. It was clear that Zeeland and Amsterdam could not disagree more regarding a possible change of the Company charter. The battle between the two parties would be fought in both the WIC and the States General, which eventually had to renew the charter.

The Zeeland directors were now openly backing the proposals of the merchants from their province. Together with the other Zeeland stakeholders in the Atlantic trade, they convinced the States of Zeeland to forcefully defend the dismantling of the monopoly in the States General. In an unexpected turn of events, the people of Zeeland received support from a group of plantation owners in Suriname who urged the States General to open up the slave trade in the colony. They said that the WIC was not able to provide a sufficient number of Africans to the colony, so there was a chronic lack of slaves.<sup>38</sup> Under pressure from all those protests, Amsterdam agreed to change the mandate, but with a number of limitations on free trade. On 8 August 1730, the States General approved the changed charter for a period of 30 years. According to the charter, the Company would have a 60-mile strip on the Gold Coast as an exclusive trade area, exactly the area that contained its forts. In addition, the WIC retained the monopoly on the slave trade in the Dutch plantation colonies in Guiana.<sup>39</sup> The renewed charter was a typical compromise product, against which the Zeeland merchants would immediately object. Once again, they were able to get the States of Zeeland to undertake action in the States General, due to which the charter was modified in 1734. The exclusive 60-mile zone was now also opened up to individuals. Only the slave trade in Guiana remained exclusive to the WIC, but it would eventually waive this right

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37 ZA, Recueils van Citters (RvC) 105, Recueil L, Directors of Amsterdam to Directors of Zeeland, 11 February 1729.

38 NL-HaNA, Verspreide West-Indische Stukken, 1.05.06, inv. no. 904. Petition of Suriname planters to the States General.

39 *Nader Prolongatie van het Octroi voor de Westindische Compagnie en van de eerste prolongatie van dien, voor den tyd van nog dertig jaaren. Gearresteert den 8 Augusti 1730* ('s-Gravenhage: Jacobus Scheltus, 1730), Article 19.

voluntarily in 1738. Several unfortunate slave journeys that had led to significant losses due to a high death rate, as well as decreasing slave prices, led the Board of the Company to decide to retreat from the slave trade.<sup>40</sup> The Zeelanders had won the battle with Amsterdam, and became the most important Dutch slave traders in the Atlantic from the 1730s onwards.

After the battle for the dissolution of the last trade monopoly had been settled, a new conflict arose. The third major conflict that the States General settled between both regions concerning Atlantic interests was about trade with, and shipping to, the plantation colonies Essequibo and Demerara. In this case, it was the Zeelanders who defended their privileges. Demerara was established in 1745 as a part of Essequibo and had been ruled from there ever since. Both colonies fell under the charter of the WIC but were managed by the Zeeland Chamber. The Zeelanders, who had founded Essequibo in 1616, claimed the exclusive right to trade in the region. As long as the plantation production was limited, nobody objected to the self-proclaimed monopoly of the Zeelanders. However, this changed when the colony grew and the demand for colonial products in the Republic increased. Around the mid-eighteenth century, opposition against the *de facto* Zeeland monopoly grew in Holland. Incidentally, the complaints did not emerge in Holland first. Rather they emerged in the colony itself, where Governor Laurens Storm van 's Gravensande repeatedly complained to the Zeeland directors about the limited supply of commodities and slaves.<sup>41</sup> This complaint was taken very seriously by the "Gentlemen Ten," the ruling Council of the WIC, and was translated into an appeal to the directors of all the chambers to stimulate the trade to Essequibo and Demerara. The Zeeland directors considered this appeal to be a violation of the Zeeland monopoly and protested against it, thus giving birth to the controversy around the shipping and trade on Essequibo and Demerara.<sup>42</sup>

The conflict about the Zeeland trade monopoly occurred in two phases. During the first phase, which lasted from 1750 until 1765, the Zeelanders fought against the directors of the Amsterdam Chamber. Two weeks after the disputed decision of the Gentlemen Ten, the main shareholders of the Zeeland Chamber gathered to agree on a strategy for the preservation of the monopoly. They chose four representatives who were to defend their interests in various political forums. On behalf of the main shareholders, many of whom had interests in the trade with Guiana, a petition was submitted to the States General in late

40 Den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven*, 343–346.

41 J.A.J., Villiers, *Storm van 's Gravensande zijn werk en zijn leven uit zijne brieven opgebouwd* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1920), 17–18.

42 NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 12, Resolution Gentlemen Ten, 11 August 1750.



August of 1750, who in turn forwarded the document to the Amsterdam Chamber for advice. The response of the Amsterdam directors was predictable. Through Willem Roëll and Thomas Hope, they stated that there had never been a Zeeland monopoly and therefore the claim of the main shareholders had to be rejected. Both directors told the States General that despite this rejection, Amsterdam was still willing to accommodate the Zeeland request if the Zeeland shareholders would compensate them for all costs incurred by the WIC for Essequibo in the past.<sup>43</sup> But by the time this Amsterdam proposal had reached The Hague, the main shareholders in Zeeland had already asked the States of Zeeland for help, who, in turn, had ordered Governor Storm van 's Gravensande in Essequibo to only allow ships with a Zeeland license to the colony.<sup>44</sup> Simultaneously, the main shareholders called on the City Council of Middelburg to fight for the preservation of the Zeeland monopoly. The result of the lobbying of the main shareholders was that the States General was repeatedly asked to preserve the Zeeland monopoly. In opposition to this, the Amsterdam directors kept urging the States of Holland and the States General to eliminate the *de facto* monopoly, unless the Zeelanders were willing to pay for it.<sup>45</sup> The Zeeland representatives in the States General consequently rejected the latter proposal, and with that prevented a possible settlement of the conflict concerning Essequibo.

1765 marked the start of a new phase, which also involved merchants from outside the WIC. The Zeeland main shareholders, who had not been against a financial settlement during the first phase, reopened the Essequibo matter in May 1765 by starting negotiations with the Amsterdam directors of the Company about the purchase of the colony. These negotiations took place in The Hague under the supervision of the delegates of the States General.<sup>46</sup> Just when a solution was within reach, a group of Dutch investors turned against the possible sale of Essequibo to Zeeland. In the 1760s, they had given significant loans to planters in the colony, and demanded free navigation to Essequibo

43 NL-HaNA, Verspreide West-Indische Stukken, 1.05.06, inv. no. 1171, Petition of major shareholders Zeeland to States General, 31 August 1751; W. Roëll and Th. Hope to States General, 19 January 1751.

44 *Verslag gedaan door Burgemeester en Wethouders van Middelburg aan den Raad der Gemeente* (Middelburg, 1898), 20.

45 Petitions of merchants and correspondence about the Zeeland monopoly can be found in NL-HaNA, Verspreide West-Indische Stukken, 1.05.06, inv. no. 1171. See also NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 451, Letters of Gentlemen Ten and Directors of Amsterdam to States General, 25 February 1755 and 10 March 1756.

46 NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 451, Gentlemen Ten and Directors of Amsterdam to States General, 25 September 1765.

and Demerara in return. In May 1768, they submitted a petition to the States General in which they insisted on the dismantling of the monopoly, which they believed to be illegal. Zeeland merchants, who feared that the colonial trade would eventually fall entirely into Amsterdam's hands, also submitted a petition to the States General, insisting on the continuation of the monopoly.<sup>47</sup> As the Zeelanders and the Hollanders fought about their opposing colonial interests in the Republic via the States General, the supply issues in Essequibo and Demerara became worse. In September 1769, Storm van 's Gravesande drew up a petition with the Council of colonists, asking the States General to allow the slave trade with the English for the payment of a tax. That petition was signed by 71 planters and sent to the Republic with a letter of support by the governor. The merchants of Zeeland were furious about the petition and said that allowing the English would mean the fall of the Dutch slave trade, which was essential to the Zeelanders.<sup>48</sup>

The conflicting petitions of the merchants of Zeeland, Amsterdam and planters in the colony led to a stalemate in the States General. To force a breakthrough in the long-running conflict, the Stadtholder was involved in the matter as a referee. William V was the supreme director of the WIC, but was represented on the Board of the Company by Ferdinand van Collen. Van Collen very likely played an important role in the establishment of a new scheme for the trade with the colonies, issued on 25 October 1770 by the governor.<sup>49</sup> It was a typical compromise in which neither party was proved right. In the new scheme, the Zeeland monopoly was rejected, but to placate them the merchants of Zeeland were given the privilege of being the first to send 16 ships to Essequibo and Demerara each spring, after which the Hollanders were also allowed to participate in navigation to both colonies. Several months after the enforcement of the new scheme, a group of Middelburg merchants founded a shipping company for navigation to the colonies. It was the final attempt to keep dominating the trade with Essequibo and Demerara, but it wasn't a very successful one. The company suffered heavy losses during the Fourth

47 NL-HaNA, Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv. no. 7886, Petition of merchants of the province of Holland, 6 May 1768; *Ibid.*, Petition of merchants of the province of Zeeland, 26 August 1768.

48 NL-HaNA, Verspreide West-Indische Stukken, 1.05.06, inv. no. 1222, Letter by the WIC Directors of Zeeland to States General, 19 February 1770; *Ibid.*, Petition of merchants of Middelburg and Vlissingen to States General, 21 March 1770.

49 NL-HaNA, Verspreide West-Indische Stukken, 1.05.06, inv. no. 1204, Resolutions States General, States of Holland and other provinces about free shipping and trade on Essequibo and Demerara, 1770–1773.

Anglo-Dutch War which lead to the elimination of the shipping company in 1788.<sup>50</sup> From 1770 onwards, the shipping activities of Amsterdam to Essequibo and Demerara increased, and Zeeland lost more and more ground. Amsterdam's preeminence did not last long, however, since in the Napoleonic Era both colonies were conquered by the British, never to be given back.<sup>51</sup>

Zeeland and Holland fought about the configuration of parts of the Atlantic shipping and trade within and outside of the existing political bodies in the Dutch Republic for a century and a half. That battle says a great deal about the interest both regions had in the Atlantic trade. To achieve their goals, the parties used various means, such as lobbying in municipal and regional governments and influencing public opinion through hundreds of pamphlets.<sup>52</sup> The mobilization of government entities and public opinion had one goal in the end: convincing the States General that a monopoly had to be preserved or dismantled. Eventually, decisions about Atlantic matters were made in The Hague. How the States General tried to steer a middle course between those conflicting interests is the subject of the last section of this chapter. First we will discuss how parties battled over, and lobbied for, the preservation and the reinforcement of their Atlantic interests at a local level in the Republic and in the colonial branches overseas.

### West India Interest on a Local Level

After the elimination of the WIC as an active trade organization, the interests of local entrepreneurs in Atlantic shipping and trade increased greatly. In the

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- 50 R. Paesie, "De 'Societeyt ter Navigatie op Essequibo en annexe Rivieren'. Op en ondergang van een Zeeuwse rederij," in *Alle streken van het kompas. Maritieme geschiedenis in Nederland*, ed. M. Ebben, H. den Heijer and J. Schokkenbroek (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2010), 295–316.
  - 51 Gert Oostindie, "British Capital, Industry and Perseverance versus Dutch Old School? The Dutch Atlantic and the Takeover of Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo, 1750–1815," *BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review* 127, no. 4 (2012): 28–55.
  - 52 Most pamphlets can be found in the Royal Library (Knuttel Collection) in The Hague, but there are also pamphlets about Atlantic disputes in the Biblioteca Thysiana (Leiden University Library) and other collections. For an overview of pamphlets published in the first half of the seventeenth century, see Asher, *A Bibliographical and Historical Essay* and M. Meijer-Drees, "Goed voor de ogen. Brilmetaforiek in vroegmoderne pamfletten" in *Het lange leven van het pamflet. Boekhistorische, iconografische, literaire en politieke aspecten van pamfletten 1600–1900*, ed. J. de Kruijf, M. Meijer Drees and J. Salman (Hilversum: Verloren, 2006), 129–142.

Republic, these interests were mainly centered in the cities of Middelburg, Vlissingen, Amsterdam and Rotterdam. In addition, there were the interests of the planters and merchants in the West Indies which were not always parallel with those of the merchants, shipping companies and processors of Atlantic products in the Republic. Each city, each colony and, within these, each group, had specific interests they tried to defend – and, where and when possible, strengthen – via the various governmental entities, the WIC and the societies. The actions taken by certain groups of stakeholders, depending on the location and nature of the group, were aimed at reducing the cost of shipping and trade, to block or promote the importation of processed products, and to open up or block certain trade routes.

How important the trade with Suriname was for Amsterdam is amply illustrated by a statement made by stakeholders from the 1730s, in which the City Council was asked for support. The authors of the document did this by demonstrating which benefits Amsterdam reaped from the trade relationship with Suriname. Every year, about 35 ships sailed from Amsterdam to Suriname and back, supplying the city with 12.5 million pounds of sugar plus great amounts of coffee and cacao. The trade with, and navigation to, the colony provided the city with many jobs and much income, thanks to the equipping of ships and the processing of Atlantic products.<sup>53</sup> The Amsterdam City Council acknowledged the importance of the trade with Suriname and stimulated and facilitated it in various ways.

Amsterdam entrepreneurs were mainly interested in the import, processing and export of sugar and other plantation products, whereas the Zeelanders mainly focused on the slave trade. After the liberalization of the trade with West Africa, including the slave trade, Zeeland shipping companies fought for decades to reduce their costs by lowering their tax burden. One of the main expenses was the tax imposed by the WIC on merchantmen which sailed back and forth between the Republic and West Africa and slave ships. The tax rate was determined by the size of the ship and the duration of the journey.<sup>54</sup> From 1730, the Zeeland shipping companies almost continuously resisted these taxes. Stakeholders in Middelburg and Vlissingen united and lobbied the city governments and the States of Zeeland for a reduction in the imposed taxes. In 1734, these actions led to an extension of the duration of journeys over which a certain sum in taxes was paid, a measure that reduced the costs for

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53 J.G. van Dillen, "Memorie betreffende de kolonie Suriname," *Economisch-historisch jaarboek* 24 (1950): 162–167.

54 Den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven*, 312–314.

shipping companies.<sup>55</sup> However, that did not end the actions of the shipping companies. In 1750, the Zeeland shipping companies launched an initiative for the full abolition of the tax. In this, they were supported by a group of Rotterdam shipping companies with interests in the slave trade, including the trade houses of Hope, Coopstad & Rochussen and Hudig.<sup>56</sup> Due to the taxes of the WIC, the competitive relationship with other European merchants in the West African commodity trade, as well as the slave trade itself, had all deteriorated seriously, since non-Dutch merchants did not have to pay any taxes, meaning they could afford to pay more for African products and slaves.<sup>57</sup> The Directors of the WIC strongly opposed the plan, however. They argued that the Zeeland and Rotterdam trade was supported by the infrastructure of the WIC in Africa. Therefore, it was only fair that those who traded with Africa paid taxes for the preservation of the necessary infrastructure. The States General agreed with the WIC and denied the request.<sup>58</sup>

Not just shipping companies, but also suppliers of these companies had significant interests in the Atlantic shipping industry. The aforementioned Amsterdam statement on trade with Suriname shows how the local middle class, from butchers to ships' carpenters, benefited from that trade relationship. For the ailing economy of Zeeland, the Atlantic trade was even more important than for Amsterdam and other cities in the province of Holland. The regulations of the Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie (MCC), for instance, stated that its merchantmen had to be equipped within the city of Middelburg – an act designed to strengthen the municipal economy.<sup>59</sup> In 1720, the MCC had been established for that specific purpose by a group of leading merchants, because the city's economy had suffered profoundly due to the competition of the cities in Holland since the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>60</sup>

55 *Naader Reglement op het subject van de vrye Vaart op de Kust van Africa voor de Onderdaanen der Vereenigde Nederlanden (...) Gearresteert den 6 October 1734* ('s-Gravenhage: Jacobus Scheltus, 1734), Articles 3–4.

56 NL-HaNA, Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv. no. 7856, Petition merchants Rotterdam to States General, 27 March 1760.

57 W.S. Unger, "Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse slavenhandel, 2. De slavenhandel der Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie, 1732–1808," *Economisch-Historisch Jaarboek* 28 (1961), 1–148, 8; A. Wisse, *De Commercie-Compagnie te Middelburg van haar oprichting tot het jaar 1754* (Utrecht: Schotanus & Jens, 1933), 68.

58 NL-HaNA, Verspreide West-Indische Stukken, 1.05.06, inv. no. 24, Petition WIC to States General, 13 October 1751. Unger, "Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis," 8.

59 ZA, Archief Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie (MCC) 49, Charter of the MCC.

60 C. Reinders Folmer-van Prooijen, *Van goederenhandel naar slavenhandel. De Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie 1720–1755* (Middelburg: Koninklijk Zeeuws Genootschap der Wetenschappen, 2000), 17.

If the Board of the MCC and other shipping companies deviated from this and ordered goods for their ships from outside the province, entrepreneurs in Vlissingen en Middelburg would protest. This led, for example, to conflicts about the purchase of alcohol and meat outside of Zeeland for the supply of slave ships.<sup>61</sup> Zeeland entrepreneurs frequently acted as an organized group during protests. In Vlissingen, Middelburg and maybe in other Zeeland cities as well, they united in so-called Merchant Committees that defended the interests of the associated entrepreneurs. When the Zeeland trade monopoly to Essequibo and Demerara was about to be dismantled, the committees protested as well.<sup>62</sup> These protests demonstrate that the lobby for the defense of the Atlantic interests of the region took place at various levels.

Stakeholders were not always as close a group as they were in Zeeland. Within a city or region, conflicting interests could arise that would be settled via political channels. A conflict of interests that became manifest in the mid-eighteenth century involved the import of sugar. That conflict, which emerged between the merchants and the sugar refiners in the Republic and in the colonies, pitted the WIC against municipal governments in the States General. Initially, only coarse sugar was imported which was refined in the Republic. But the technique of sugar refining, which had been perfected in the Republic, had reached Europe and the Caribbean during the first half of the eighteenth century, which led to more and more refined sugar being imported and transhipped by Amsterdam merchants.<sup>63</sup> The sugar refiners of Amsterdam, who expected their industry to be significantly damaged by this new development, objected to the importation of refined sugar. Merchants on St. Eustatius and in Amsterdam, who benefited from the trade in refined sugar, fought the opposed import limitation.<sup>64</sup> Initially, the request for import limitation from the sugar refiners was not granted by the States General. However, as a concession, the import of raw sugar and the export of refined sugar was made tax-free for a period of two years in 1751. It relieved the financial burdens of the sugar

61 ZA, MCC 83, Request of Directors MCC, merchants and shipowners to burgomasters of Middelburg, 25 May 1754; MCC 108, Concept request Directors MCC to burgomasters of Middelburg, undated.

62 ZA, RvC 20, Committee of merchants of Vlissingen to States General, 24 April 1770; Ibid., Request of several merchants to States of Zeeland, 28 June 1770.

63 K. Davids, *The Rise and Decline of Dutch Technological Leadership. Technology, Economy and Culture in the Netherlands, 1350–1800*, 2 vols. (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008), 2:343–344; L. Knappert, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandsche Bovenwindsche eilanden in de 18e eeuw* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1932), 255–257.

64 NL-HaNA, Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv. no. 7822, Petition sugar refiners to States General, 6 May 1751; NA, SG 3809, Resolution 5 September 1754.

refiners and the competitive position of sugar refined in the Republic improved.<sup>65</sup> However, the sugar refiners were not pleased with these temporary measures. Their persistent protests eventually led to a limitation on the import of refined sugar from the Caribbean in 1756, despite the resistance of stakeholders on St. Eustatius.<sup>66</sup> Not only Amsterdam sugar refiners but also the Rotterdam sugar refiners felt disadvantaged by the activities of the sugar traders. In the States General, they objected to the transit of lightly-taxed raw sugar to the Rhineland via Rotterdam, where a sugar processing industry had developed in a short period of time. As a result of this, Rotterdam sugar refiners were about to be pushed from the market by their colleagues from Cologne. The States General accommodated the Rotterdam sugar refiners by doubling the tax on the export of raw sugar.<sup>67</sup>

Sugar was not the only Atlantic product that caused conflicts between merchants and manufacturers. Tobacco had the same effect. In 1752, the States of Zeeland were handling a request by a group of tobacco processors from Middelburg, Vlissingen, Zierikzee and Veere. The united manufacturers asked the States for a tax increase on the import of processed tobacco, which would allow them to work in a more competitive manner.<sup>68</sup> This request was honored. Merchants who imported processed tobacco, however, felt seriously disadvantaged and asked the States to reduce the imposed tax, but this request was denied.<sup>69</sup> Why the requests of the merchants were denied can easily be explained. It was in the interest of the government that the employment rate in the cities remained at their current levels, and the processing of raw Atlantic products resulted in more jobs than the import of processed products.

Obviously, interests were not only represented in the Republic, but in the colonies as well. An interesting example of this is the conflict between the colonists and the Society of Suriname about the trade of the colony with North America. According to the charter of the Society, the colonists were only allowed to maintain a trade relationship with the Republic. They supplied the Republic with plantation products, whereas merchants from the Republic

65 NL-HaNA, Staten-Generaal, 1.01.02, inv. no. 3806, Resolutions 6 May, 31 August and 16 October 1751.

66 NL-HaNA, WIC, 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 451, Gentlemen Ten to States General, 4 May 1756. Knappert, *Geschiedenis*, 256–257.

67 C. Visser, *Verkeersindustrieën te Rotterdam in de tweede helft der achttiende eeuw* (Rotterdam: Benedictus, 1927), 32–33.

68 ZA, Printed resolutions States of Zeeland 1752, 16 March 1752; Collection of manuscripts 825, 20 July 1755, 9 May 1761 and 20 September 1762.

69 ZA, Printed resolutions States of Zeeland 1754 and 1755, 11 March 1754 and 14 August 1755.

would provide the colonists with the necessary European products. That symbiotic relationship between colony and homeland would soon appear to be unworkable. For the import of sufficient draught animals and food and the export of molasses (a residual product of sugar that was not shipped to the Republic) the colonists depended heavily on the regional trade. Initially, they had a trade relationship with Barbados, but at the end of the seventeenth century it shifted to trade with North American colonies.<sup>70</sup> That trade was illegal, but was often condoned. A long-term conflict arose about the legalization of the trade with North America between the colonial government, which represented the interests of the Society of Suriname and the planters. The main opponent of the imposed trade ban was the influential planter Samuel Nassy. Eventually, colonists succeeded in legalizing the trade with North America. As of 1704, it was permitted under certain conditions and on the payment of a tax.<sup>71</sup>

### Conclusion

In this final section, we will return to the question of whether or not the Republic had a West India Interest. Van der Voort thought that there was not one, and was supported in this view by Piet Emmer. Emmer states that the British plantation colonies in the Caribbean were considered “darlings of empire” in the metropole. All plantation products produced on the islands had to be shipped to Great Britain according to the Acts of Navigation introduced in the seventeenth century, where they were processed into end products and subsequently sold on the domestic and foreign markets. Processed and unprocessed Atlantic products from non-British colonies were barred from Great Britain. That mercantilist policy was supposedly reinforced in the course of the eighteenth century by the lobby of stakeholders in the West Indian plantations and trade. The Republic did not have such protective constructions, due to which, as Emmer states, it was impossible to have a common West India Interest such as existed in Great Britain.<sup>72</sup> His observation is correct insofar as

70 See Karwan Fatah-Black's chapter in this volume.

71 J.A. Schiltkamp and J. Th. de Schmidt, eds., *West Indisch Plakaatboek. Plakaten, ordonnantiën en andere wetten uitgevaardigd in Suriname, 1667–1761* 2 vols., (Amsterdam: Emmering, 1973), 1:253–255; Fatah-Black, *Suriname and the Atlantic World* (unpublished PhD diss., diss., University of Leiden, 2013).

72 P.C. Emmer, “The Dutch and the Atlantic Challenge, 1600–1800,” in *A Deus ex Machina Revisited. Atlantic Colonial Trade and European Economic Development*, ed. P.C. Emmer, O. Pétré-Grenouilleau and Jessica Vance Roitman (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006), 176.



it concerns a homogenous group that rallied behind one common interest, which in fact did not happen in the Republic. But O'Shaughnessy demonstrated that this communal cause only existed briefly in Great Britain. Moreover, "the size of the West India lobby (...) was not sufficient to explain their influence upon government."<sup>73</sup> The influence of such interest groups was often greatly exaggerated in the past.<sup>74</sup> When, in the late eighteenth century, an abolitionist movement emerged within and outside of the parliament, the West Indian lobbyists did not succeed in providing sufficient counterweight to it, and eventually they had to accept that slavery would be abolished.

It is clear that there is much to criticize about the classic belief that Great Britain has known a politically influential, convergent West Indian interest group. The British government did take measures to protect its West Indian interests, but they were part of a much wider mercantilist policy that was supposed to promote their own trade and industry and to increase the income of the state. Since the seventeenth century, Great Britain had a Board of Trade and Plantations, managed by the Privy Counsel. The decentralized Republic did not have such a central organ, but the necessity to protect the Atlantic interest was widely acknowledged. A mercantilist policy was not viewed as the appropriate means for this protection, however. Unlike Great Britain, the Republic had neither extensive plantation colonies nor a large internal market to which tropical products could be sold. Moreover, the States General always had to take into account the West Indian interests of the various cities and provinces. This required the necessary persuasion and compromise politics that involved a lot of trial and error. These actions of the States General, in particular, demonstrate that there was a widely supported West India Interest that suited the decentralized nature of the Republic.

Initially, the States General greatly influenced the development of private trade and shipping in the Atlantic based on political-military motives. When those motives were no longer relevant and the economic interests of the Republic in the Atlantic became increasingly important, the States General supported those interests in various ways. Firstly, by offering military assistance. The WIC was, unlike her sister organization, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in Asia, unable to defend Dutch interests in the Atlantic. As of the mid-seventeenth century, war fleets were dispatched to Africa and America, trade ships convoyed from and to the Caribbean, State troops deployed in

<sup>73</sup> O'Shaughnessy, "The Formation," 93.

<sup>74</sup> J.D. Stewart, *British Pressure Groups: Their Role in Relation to the House of Commons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 238.

plantation colonies, and money made available for defense purposes. All this happened, of course, within the limited financial resources the States General had. More difficult to deal with were the often-opposed Atlantic interests of the cities and regions within the Republic. On paper, every voting city in a province and every province in the States General had an equal vote, but in practice the vote of the economically strongest party would always be worth much more. Even in the early modern era, the unwritten rule was “he who pays the piper calls the tune.” Thus, the political battle fought in the States General regarding the Atlantic interests was often settled to the advantage of the merchants and entrepreneurs of Amsterdam. An example of this was the discussion regarding free trade to Brazil. However, to make sure that the discrepancies would not get too extensive, the States General, which was dominated by the representatives of Holland, also had to satisfy the Zeelanders in certain situations. This was done, for instance, by abolishing the WIC monopoly on the slave trade, which helped Middelburg and Vlissingen to obtain a leading position in this trade. The routes to the plantation colonies of Demerara and Essequibo, despite the formal abolition of the Zeeland monopoly in 1770, also remained mainly in the hands of the Zeeland merchants. In contrast, Amsterdam, and, to a lesser extent, Rotterdam, almost fully controlled the import of plantation products. The processing of sugar and tobacco mainly took place in these two cities. The assumption of Van der Voort and Emmer that the Republic did not have a West India interest, is, in my opinion, a misconception. It existed, but its makeup differed from that of Great Britain in some respects. The Atlantic interests were significant at local and regional levels, especially in Holland and Zeeland, and were strongly defended by the various parties in the States General. Moreover, these interests grew more and more essential. While the economy of the Republic began to stagnate around the mid-eighteenth century, its share of the Atlantic trade nevertheless increased due to the growing demand in Europe for sugar, coffee, tobacco and other plantation products.<sup>75</sup> Every year, dozens of ships sailed to African and American port cities to sell Dutch products, buy slaves and load plantation products. In addition, many plantation products were imported into the Republic indirectly via French and British ports. The sugar and tobacco industry provided jobs to thousands of people in Amsterdam and

75 J.L. van Zanden and A. van Riel, *Nederland 1780–1914: staat, instituties en economische ontwikkeling* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2000), 31 Table 1.1; J. de Vries, “The Dutch Atlantic Economies,” in *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practise and Personnel*, ed. P.A. Coclanis (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 1–29, 18–21.

Rotterdam.<sup>76</sup> This development led more and more people in the Republic to invest capital in West Indian plantations. In the period of 1753–1794, Dutch investors poured an estimated 80 million guilders in plantations, a quarter of which was invested in non-Dutch colonies. Over 80 percent of that money originated from Amsterdam investors. The Amsterdam financial crisis of 1773 that affected many investors in plantations did not end the growth of the Atlantic trade and the shipping of the Republic.<sup>77</sup> Only after the French and the patriots had dissolved the old Republic in 1795 did the tide turn.

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76 In 1740, approximately 165 sugar refineries with an average of 20 workers per factory and an unknown number of small sugar processing industries were operating in the Republic, most of them in Amsterdam. This number remained relatively stable until the end of the eighteenth century. Unfortunately there are no reliable figures for the tobacco industry. J. de Vries and A. van der Woude, *Nederland 1500–1815. De eerste ronde van moderne economische groei* (Amsterdam: Balans, 1995), 386–388; C. Lesger, “Stagnatie en stabiliteit. De economie tussen 1730 en 1795” in *Geschiedenis van Amsterdam. Zelfbewuste stadstaat, 1650–1813*, ed. W. Frijhoff and M. Prak, 4 vols., (Amsterdam: SUN, 2005), 2-2:240–244.

77 Van de Voort, *De Westindische plantages*, 264–265, appendices XVIII and XIX.

### SECTION 3

#### *Intellectual and Intercultural Encounters*





# Adultery Here and There

## *Crossing Sexual Boundaries in the Dutch Jewish Atlantic*

Aviva Ben-Ur and Jessica Vance Roitman

In 1777, the widow of Moses Pacheco of Paramaribo, Suriname was busy with preparations for her daughter's upcoming marriage to Jacob Nunes Nabarro. As the wedding day approached, a proverbial ax swung down. The local religious teacher, Rabbi Aron Acohen, came forward to declare that her daughter could not legally wed because she was the product of a forbidden relationship between widow Pacheco and her brother-in-law, Jacob Jona, initiated while both were still living in Amsterdam. In fact, according to Acohen, the Amsterdam Mahamad (the governing body of Portuguese Jews) had banished Jona from the land because of his crime. But when widow Pacheco was called before the Surinamese Jewish regents to discharge herself, she claimed that the child she had conceived after her husband's death was the product of a fleeting relationship with an itinerant Jew from Bayonne. Moreover, she knew nothing about her brother-in-law Jona's expulsion other than its cause: the Amsterdam Mahamad wished to rid itself of an impoverished family. The wedding was indefinitely postponed as the opposing parties, the Pachecos and the Jonas, gathered testimony in support of their version of the truth and the honor of their respective families.<sup>1</sup>

In the early modern Dutch Republic and in some of the overseas colonies adultery was – at least officially – among the most serious of crimes and rather common.<sup>2</sup> Preoccupation with real and imagined cases of criminal

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1 National Archives of the Netherlands, The Hague (hereafter NL-HaNA), Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, May 8, June 17, and October 27, 1777.

2 This statement's obvious applicability to early modern Europe and its overseas territories lies outside the scope of this chapter. For the Dutch Republic, see, among other works, Herman Roodenburg, *Onder censuur: De kerkelijke tucht in de gereformeerde gemeente van Amsterdam, 1578–1700* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1990); Else Margaretha Kloek, *Wie hij zij, man of wijf: Vrouwengeschiedenis en de vroegmoderne tijd: Drie Leidse studies* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1990); Veronique Verhaar and Frits van den Brink, "De bemoeienissen van stad en kerk met overspel in het achttiende-eeuwse Amsterdam," in *Nieuw Licht op Oude Justitie: Misdaad en Straffen Tijde van de Republiek* ed. Sjoerd Faber (Muiderberg: Dick Coutinho, 1989), 64–93. For the Dutch colonies overseas, see Danny L. Noorlander, "Serving God and Mammon: The Reformed Church and the Dutch West India Company in the Atlantic World, 1621–1674," (unpublished Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University, 2011); J. Th. de Smidt and T. van der Lee, eds., *Plakaten, Ordonnantiën, en Andere Wetten, Uitgevaardigd in Suriname, 1667–1816*, 2 volumes (Amsterdam: S. Emmering, 1973) and J.Th. de Smidt, R. van der Lee, J.A. Schiltkamp, eds.,

conversation has produced a large and rich body of sources, affording scholars an unparalleled opportunity to explore the social status and experiences of individuals and groups often overlooked in the historiography of the Dutch Atlantic: women, Jews, and enslaved and free peoples of African ancestry. The adulterous act, the trials that ensued, and the offspring sometimes produced from these liaisons, touch on some key discussions about the Atlantic world now current in scholarly circles: the transmission of rumors, the roles enslaved and manumitted peoples played in shaping white-dominated societies, the development and inter-communal use of Caribbean Creole languages, racialized sexual double standards, notions of public honor, the asymmetrical status change experienced by adulterous women (in comparison to men), and the roles of communal leaders and laymen in creating what one scholar calls “the language of silence.”<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter, we focus on laws regarding adultery in the Jewish religious and civil codes and how this crime was dealt with in practice. The cases of adultery in the Dutch Jewish Atlantic, we posit, are representative of a broader trend in Europe and the colonial Americas, whereby the status and reputation of the accused couple were more crucial in determining vulnerability to prosecution than the sexual transgression itself, as discussed below. Wealth or lack thereof, race, and religious or political dissonance ultimately determined whether or not one was judged guilty. We also demonstrate that Jewish law in the Dutch Atlantic colonies most often worked alongside Dutch civil law. In

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*Publikaties en andere wetten alsmede de oudste resoluties betreffende op Curaçao, Aruba, Bonaire*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: S. Emmering, 1978); J. Th. de Smidt and T. van der Lee, eds., *Publikaties en andere wetten betreffende op St. Maarten St. Eustatius, Saba, 1648/1681–1816* (Amsterdam: S. Emmering, 1979). For scholarship on England see Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), chapter 6, and Laura Growing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), chapter 3. For British North America see Mary Beth Norton, “Gender and Defamation in Seventeenth-Century Maryland,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, 44, no. 1 (January, 1987): 4–39; “Gender, Crime, and Community in Seventeenth-Century Maryland,” in *The Transformation of Early American History*, ed. James Henretta, Michael Kammen, and Stanley Katz (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 123–150; and *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996).

3 Carlos Herrera, “Infidelity and the Presidio Captain: Adultery and Honor in the Lives of María Rosa Tato y Anza and José Antonio Vildósola, Sonora, New Spain, 1769–1783,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15, no. 2 (May 2006): 204–227, 214.

fact, three judicial systems with their corresponding legislation were at play: those of the metropole, the colonial authorities, and the Jewish community. Our research shows that these three legal systems functioned not just parallel to each other, but in fact in conversation, with Jewish law in most cases occupying a subordinate position.

Detailed accounts of sexual misconduct are rarely found in the records. The four cases we consider here are centered primarily in Amsterdam and in the overseas Dutch colonies of Suriname and Curaçao during the 1770s. These cases are representative of adultery during the early modern period and how it was handled in the broader societies of Europe and the white population overseas. At the same time, the four scandals under study expose the distinctive ways in which Portuguese Jewish communities – who comprised one-third to one-half of the white populations – understood and treated the transgression on their own terms.

### The Sources

An important consideration for any comparative study involving Portuguese Jewish communities in the Dutch Atlantic is the unevenness of documentation. The two main Jewish communities of the Americas during the eighteenth century were those of Suriname and Curaçao, and there is extensive Dutch colonial administrative documentation for both. However, internal sources are a different matter. While the communal minutes of Suriname have been preserved almost uninterruptedly from the mid-eighteenth century, those of Curaçao's Mahamad seem not to have survived. The municipal archive of Amsterdam, which houses the records of Curaçao's Jewish community, does not contain any continuous documentation pertaining to this community, in contrast to the records of Suriname's Portuguese Jewish community, held in the Dutch National Archives of The Hague.

This is both an opportunity for historians and a hindrance. The opportunity has enabled us to systematically scour the records of the Surinamese Jewish regents, and conclusively state that roughly a dozen adultery cases were discussed during the century beginning in 1751.<sup>4</sup> However, we were encumbered in our comparative analysis because for Curaçao the sources for adultery are much spottier and thus nowhere nearly as representative as what has survived

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4 Systematic analysis of the communal minutes of Suriname's Portuguese Jewish community was conducted by Aviva Ben-Ur beginning in 2009. Research on Curaçao was undertaken by Jessica Roitman.



for Suriname. The linguistic loss is especially overwhelming, for the no longer extant testimony documenting a leading adultery case in Curaçao was originally recorded in Portuguese, Spanish, and in a language referred to as Portuguese Negro speech (*Portugeese neegers spraak*), a possible indication of a Jewish version of the island's Creole language Papiamentu. Additionally, at the time of this writing, several key inventories for Suriname, including governors' journals and the records of the colonial court, were inaccessible due to a massive, ongoing restoration and digitizing project. We were therefore unable to consult records created by the Surinamese colonial authorities. Despite these lacunae, the total information is sufficiently abundant so that the main task at hand involves winnowing rather than speculating. The cases we have focused upon were the most prominent in terms of length of litigation and the attention of communal and colonial authorities.

### Adultery in the Dutch Atlantic: How Common, and How Serious a Crime?

Just how common unfaithfulness was in the early modern Dutch Atlantic is difficult to assess, given the extent of unquarried sources (and the corollary lack of statistical evidence), culturally variable definitions of the transgression, and the connivance of local authorities and highly-placed families to conceal scandal. In an article mainly concerned with bastardy in eighteenth-century Maryland, one historian posits that unfaithfulness within marriage was "uncommon enough to be gossip-worthy but certainly not unheard of."<sup>5</sup> But, as other early modern scholars of the Anglophone and Iberian Americas have shown, strong social networks, wealth, and political power often protected straying husbands and wives from conviction and prosecution.<sup>6</sup>

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5 Catherine Cardno, "The Fruit of Nine, Sue kindly brought: Colonial Enforcement of Sexual Norms in Eighteenth-Century Maryland," in *Colonial Chesapeake: New Perspectives*, ed. Melanie Perrault and Debra Meyers, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006), 257–282, 258–259.

6 Carolyn Ramsey, "Sex and Social Order: The Selective Enforcement of Colonial American Adultery Laws in the English Context," *The Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities* 10 (1998): 191–228, 225; Herrera, "Infidelity and the Presidio Captain," 214. This could also apply to well-connected slave women accused of "fornication" and slander. See Dennis Sullivan, *The Punishment of Crimes in Colonial New York: The Dutch Experience in Albany during the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 141.

Let us begin with the United Provinces, whose early modern population hovered around a million and a half.<sup>7</sup> The *Hof van Holland* inventory, preserved in the Dutch National Archives in The Hague, contains over 100 cases of *overspel*, dating to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, almost all between illicit Christian couples living in the United Provinces.<sup>8</sup> Herman Roodenburg's study of the Protestant Dutch Reformed church of Amsterdam between 1578 and 1700 reveals a total of 726 cases of adultery that were brought before the consistory, in which 783 members of the church were involved.<sup>9</sup> In Leiden alone, over 200 men and women were accused of either adultery or bigamy between 1678 and 1794.<sup>10</sup> During roughly the same time period, dozens of adultery cases came to the attention of the Portuguese Jewish authorities of Amsterdam, where nearly 17,000 Jews lived by the mid-eighteenth century, though only 3000 of them of Iberian origins.<sup>11</sup> A brief glance at sexual behavior in Dutch overseas colonies shows that the Jewish communities of Curaçao and Suriname, whose populations peaked at just over 1000 in the late eighteenth century, laid claim to a few dozen known infidelity scandals. Among Christian settlers in seventeenth-century New Netherland, Curaçao, Brazil, São Tomé, and Elmina, adultery was one of the most dominant prosecuted crimes.<sup>12</sup>

7 It reached its height by the latter part of the mid-seventeenth century, when the population was just under two million. Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 620.

8 NL-HaNA, Inventaris van het archief van het Hof van Holland, 1428–1811, 3.03.01.01 *passim*. We thank Wim Klooster for alerting us to this source. A number of deponents or defendants come from Germany (e.g. inv. nr. 9218, Dossier I G 17, Willem de Groot contra Sophia Wilhelmina Geertruy Dahlman, 1794–1795).

9 Herman Roodenburg, *Onder censuur*, 280–281.

10 Else Margaretha Klok, *Wie hij zij, man of wijf*, 142–145. To be exact: 101 women and 132 men accused of either adultery or bigamy.

11 Yosef Kaplan, "Deviance and Excommunication in the Eighteenth Century: A Chapter in the Social History of the Sephardi Community of Amsterdam," in *Dutch Jewish History, Volume III: Proceedings of the Fifth Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, ed. J. Michman (Jerusalem and Assen: Hebrew University and Van Gorcum, 1993), 103–115 and *An Alternative Path to Modernity: The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld, "Sephardi Women in Holland's Golden Age," in *Sephardi Family Life in the Early Modern Diaspora*, ed. Julia R. Lieberman (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 177–222, 182–183; Jonathan I. Israel, "The Republic of the United Netherlands until about 1750: Demographic and Economic Activity," in *History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, ed. J.C.H. Blom, R.G. Fuks-Mansfeld, and Ivo Schöffer (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), 85–115, 100.

12 Danny L. Noorlander, "Serving God and Mammon," 183, 197, 222, 282, 313.

Adultery had always been punishable in Christian and Jewish communities, whether by religious or secular governing bodies.<sup>13</sup> Adultery (along with bigamy and concubinage) was made punishable by law through the issuance in 1570 of the *Criminele Ordonnantien*, the first codified body of criminal legislation in Holland.<sup>14</sup> In the Protestant Dutch Republic, and eventually overseas, several governing bodies could intervene in prosecuting the crime and determining its punishment, from criminal and civil lawyers to church councils.<sup>15</sup> In the Portuguese Jewish community, established in Amsterdam in the 1590s, suspected Jewish adulterers could be investigated by the Christian civil authorities, *hakhamim* (Jewish religious leaders), or the Mahamad.<sup>16</sup>

Penal sanctions for extramarital dalliances varied according to time and place, but by the early modern period, religious and secular authorities largely overlapped in their responses, which had steadily softened over time. The more lenient approach derives from medieval canon law, which by the mid-thirteenth century tended to mitigate the harshness with which ancient and many medieval secular codes had treated adultery. Probably under the Church's influence, lighter sentences were increasingly applied in medieval secular law. The death penalty gave way to heavy fines and public humiliation, which often meant whipping or the shaving of the head.<sup>17</sup>

Dutch Reformed and secular law appear to have followed the lead of the medieval Catholic Church. In Amsterdam, which became Reformed in 1578, and elsewhere in the United Provinces, punishments for infidelity ranged

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- 13 Veronique Verhaar and Frits van den Brink, "De bemoeienissen van stad en kerk met overspel in het achttiende-eeuwse Amsterdam," 64; Edward Fram, "Two Cases of Adultery and the Halakhic Decision-Making Process," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 26, no. 2 (November 2002): 277–300.
  - 14 Rab Houston and Manon van der Heijden, "Hands across the Water: The Making and Breaking of Marriage between Dutch and Scots in the Mid-Eighteenth Century," *Law and History Review* 15, no. 2 (Autumn 1997): 215–242, 222.
  - 15 Verhaar and van den Brink, "De bemoeienissen van stad en kerk," 64.
  - 16 For examples of Jews tried for adultery by Dutch civil authorities, see Manon van der Heijden, *Huwelijk in Holland: Stedelijke rechtspraak en kerkelijke tucht, 1550–1700* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 1998), 149 and NL-HaNA, Hof van Holland, 3.03.01.01 inv. nr. 5339.20, Mandament van purge voor Moses Castanghe beschuldigd van overspel, 1684 and inv. nr. 5348.17, Mandament van purge over Abraham Cardoso, 1688. Both of these men were merchants, the former in Amsterdam, the latter in Rotterdam. Although neither is mentioned explicitly as a Jew, their Hebrew first names and Iberian last names are indicative.
  - 17 James A. Brundage, "Adultery and Fornication: a study in legal theology," in *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church*, ed. V.L. Bullough and J.A. Brundage (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1982), 133–134 (for the mid-thirteenth century).

from a warning from the church, to imprisonment, heavy fines, stripping of ecclesiastic honors, and banishment for a period of six to 50 years.<sup>18</sup> During the early modern period, execution was almost never applied to convicted adulterers. A law promulgated in 1669 in Suriname, which slated convicted married adulterers of either sex to the death penalty, seems to have been exceptional in its severity.<sup>19</sup> With the exception of Suriname, adultery does not even appear as a named offense in the law codes of the Dutch Americas.<sup>20</sup> Whatever the laws may have been, a sexual double standard can be detected in early cases overseas. In Dutch Brazil (1630–1654), one white Christian woman with a husband left behind in the United Provinces pretended that her co-habitation with a local soldier was legal. When her testimony about the details of her supposed marriage contradicted the information provided during her lover's interrogation, Brazil's High Council summarily shipped her back to the metropole.<sup>21</sup> Philippus Specht, a Dutch Reformed minister in Curaçao, complained in 1672 about rampant inebriation, whoredom (*hoererij*), and adultery. After the church council revealed to him that some individuals had openly philandered, Specht appealed to the colony's director, who ejected four "adulterous whores" from the island.<sup>22</sup>

Judging from references to infidelity in off-the-cuff remarks during heated arguments, it is clear that adultery bore an intense emotional charge.

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- 18 Dina Maria Helmers, '*Gescheurde bedden; Oplossingen voor gestrande huwelijken, Amsterdam 1753–1810* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2002), 226–278; Verhaar and Van den Brink, "De bemoeienissen van stad en kerk," 64–71; van der Heijden, *Huwelijk in Holland*, 143.
  - 19 "Criminele en penaele wetten ende ordonnantiën," February 19, 1669, in J. Th. de Smidt and T. van der Lee, eds., *Plakaten, Ordonnantiën, en Andere Wetten, Uitgevaardigd in Suriname, 1667–1816*, I: 33–35; 34 (article 10). Interestingly, the ordinance applies only to double (not single) adulterers. Double adultery involved two married couples, while in single adultery only one party is married.
  - 20 The *West Indisch Plakaatboeken* for Curaçao, Aruba, Bonaire, St. Maarten, St. Eustatius, and Saba do not mention adultery (*boeleren, echtbreuk, overspel, fornicatie*). J. Th. de Smidt, R. van der Lee, J.A. Schiltkamp, eds., *Publikaties en andere wetten alsmede de oudste resoluties betrekking hebbende op Curaçao, Aruba, Bonaire*; J. Th. de Smidt and T. van der Lee, eds., *Publikaties en andere wetten betrekking hebbende op St. Maarten St. Eustatius, Saba, 1648/1681–1816*. It is of course very possible that some *plakaaten* have yet to be recovered from the archives.
  - 21 Meetings of the Reformed Church Council, March 3, 1637, and January 5, 1638, in "Classicale Acta van Brazilië," *Archief voor de geschiedenis der oude Hollandsche zending*, 6 vols., (Utrecht: C. van Bentum, 1885), 2: 224–225, 236.
  - 22 Amsterdam Municipal Archives (henceforth SAA), Archief Classis Amsterdam (ACA) 379, fol. 224, Minister Philippus Specht to the classis of Amsterdam, Curaçao, March 8, 1674. We thank Wim Klooster for this source.

In Suriname, adultery was a known offhand allegation, whether against women or men. Wives of Moravian missionaries were accused of whoredom in the eighteenth century,<sup>23</sup> as were several married men and women living in the mixed white and Eurafrican Jewish communities of Paramaribo and Jodensavanne.<sup>24</sup> Abraham Gabay Izidro, a rabbinical leader (*hakham*) who served the Jewish community of Suriname in the eighteenth century, understood the severity of the slur when he attempted to excoriate his colleagues, the regents of the Mahamad, in a lengthy exposition recorded in 1737. His main dispute with them centered on internal communal governance, yet Izidro pointedly extracted from his arsenal of insults irrelevant references to sexual transgressions, including the regents' "facility with women" (*facilidad con mujeres*) and "their evil passions" (*negras pasiones*), a thinly veiled allusion to intimate relations with enslaved women.<sup>25</sup> Sixty years later, Ishak Ledesma Meatob was sentenced to imprisonment in the fort of Paramaribo for insulting the cadaver of a recently deceased regent and for failing to heed the commands of incumbent Jewish rulers. As Ledesma was carted away, a fellow Jew and sympathizer cried out in Dutch: "The armed guards are coming to take Ledesma away to the fort. Shitty Mahamad, bastards, hare eaters! They go on board a ship in order to eat pig! Riff raff, *adulterers!*" (*italics ours*).<sup>26</sup>

23 Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Atlantic Lives: An 18th-Century Couple's Search for Truth and Opportunity in America*, in progress.

24 Ibid.; NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, May 8, 1777. Esther Jona, née Fonseca, was publicly called a slut by Eliahu Pacheco in front of Roza, wife of Isaac P. Brandon and N. Belmonte and some Ashkenazim. Jeosua M. Arrias and Ester D'Aguilar were accused of insulting the honor and reputation of Daniel de Mord Fernandes' wife by and injuring the honor and reputation of Semuel Ha de la Parra by claiming that de la Parra had committed adultery with Mrs. Fernandes. NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 2, June 24, 25, and 26, 1782. The term "Eurafrican" is borrowed from George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in western Africa: commerce, social status, gender, and religious observance from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003). "Eurafrican" is a scholarly neologism that was not used by Surinamese people. We apply it in this chapter as a simple way of generalizing the various terms noted in the Surinamese records to denote slaves and free persons who were legally recognized to have dual European and African ancestry, such as "poetice," "moestice," "castice," and "mulatto."

25 SAA, inv. nr. 1029, 30.

26 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 3, January 22, 1797. "De Patrouille komt bij Ledesma om hem aan 't fort te brengen, strontige Mahamad schurken hazen freeters, zij gaan aan 't boord van de Barken om varkens hart te eeten, canailles, echtbrekers..."

These remarks made in the heat of the moment help to provide an emotional context for adultery among early modern peoples. At its most elemental level, adultery was a sexual transgression that violated universal norms forbidding intimate contact between particular members of a family or society. In the Dutch Atlantic world, as in many other early modern societies of Europe and their American colonies, adultery among established families upset the social lines carefully drawn between legally paired couples, on the one hand, and the lower classes, on the other. In overseas settlements, adultery could topple the status of reputable families and diminish their social distance from the majority enslaved and manumitted populations. Moreover, the child potentially created through *overspel* or *echtbreuk* (the two most common Dutch synonyms for adultery) burdened communal authorities with legislative and financial complications.<sup>27</sup> The resulting children were typically maltreated by governing authorities, an indication that the human products of criminal conversation were considered a distortion of nature.<sup>28</sup> In a legal sense, children born of forbidden relations between two white parties were to a certain extent parallel to slaves and even more so to free people of color. Both were attributed an ignoble social status as the publicly identified issue of their mothers, rather than their fathers, and both were deprived of certain privileges centered on inheritance and property rights.<sup>29</sup> In slave societies, adultery was perhaps more disruptive as a social leveler than as a family destabilizer. In short, adultery was a serious transgression in the Dutch Atlantic. Just how serious can best be measured not through legislation and official punitive

27 *Boeleren* (in this case, double adultery) is the word used in the Surinamese edict of 1669. During the seventeenth century, the words *fornicatie* and *hoerendom* are found in Cape Town legislation referring to sex among singles. See V.C. Malherbe, "In Onegt Verwekt: Law, Custom and Illegitimacy in Cape Town, 1800–1840," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31, no. 1 (2005): 163–185, 166.

28 Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Christianity and Sexuality in the Early Modern World: Regulating Desire, Reforming Practice* (London: Routledge, 1990), 261. This understanding is reflected in early modern English usage, where extra-marital progeny were known as "bastards" and the product of inter-religious or inter-racial unions referred to as a "bastard race." Michael Neill, "Unproper Beds: Race, Adultery, and the Hideous in Othello," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (Winter 1989): 383–412, note 69. The Anglophone understanding of bastards as a degraded intermixture of base elements, as pollution, may have been more closely shared – at least linguistically – by members of the Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking Jewish community, whose word for the crime was *adulterio*. However, in eighteenth-century Portuguese, *adulterio* carries the secondary meaning of counterfeiting, not polluting.

29 These distinction trace, in part, to early canon and Roman civil law. See Malherbe, "In Onegt Verwekt," 174–175.

measures, which varied according to place and time, but rather within the specific socio-political context in which each case unfolded.

### Adultery in Cross-Cultural Perspective

Social scientists have long warned against projecting ethnocentric definitions of adultery onto cultures under study during fieldwork,<sup>30</sup> and this mandate is equally applicable to historians examining the multi-ethnic and multi-religious Dutch Atlantic. In canonical Christianity, adultery generally refers to extramarital intercourse between a spouse of either sex and someone of the opposite sex. Canon law eliminated the pagan Roman double standard by which married men did not transgress if they copulated with single women.<sup>31</sup> Even though rabbinical law incorporated the pagan double standard, Jews generally had a very different understanding of this type of sexual transgression, beginning with the term they used to describe it. Adultery, which appears in the Hebrew Bible as a verb rather than a noun, is a violation of the seventh commandment of the Decalogue: "Thou shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:12; לֹא תִנָּאֵף).<sup>32</sup> Under biblical and rabbinical law (based on Leviticus 18:6), the act falls under the category of *gilui arayot* (גִּלְוֵי עֲרִיּוֹת literally, the exposure of genitalia), sometimes translated as "sexual immorality." This category includes a variety of forbidden male/female relations: not only intercourse between a married woman and a man other than her husband, but also between, for example, parent and child and sister and brother-in-law. Neither biblical law nor its rabbinical successor recognizes as transgressive sexual intercourse between a married male and an unmarried woman (unless she happens to be his sister-in-law).<sup>33</sup> However, in the Dutch Atlantic world, *gilui arayot* was very seldom discussed in application to actual cases. Like many other rabbinical laws, the Jewish understanding of sexual transgression was largely displaced by Christian sexual morality prevailing in Western Europe. In most cases, either the Portuguese term *adulterio* is applied, or, more commonly, the minutes taker drew upon a variety of euphemisms, such as "an act

30 George Peter Murdock, *Social Structure* (New York: The Free Press, 1949), 263–264, Jack Goody, "A Comparative Approach to Incest and Adultery," *The British Journal of Sociology* 7, no.4 (December 1956): 286–305, 287–288.

31 James A. Brundage, *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church* (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1982), 131.

32 Edward Fram, "Two Cases of Adultery and the Halakhic Decision-Making Process," 279.

33 Gail Labovitz, "Adultery in Judaism," in *Encyclopedia of Love in World Religions*, ed. Yudit Kornberg Greenberg (ABC-CLIO, 2007), 34–35.

against religion" or "scandalous," all clearly relating to marital infidelity given the discussion's context.

This chapter does not attempt to tackle the question of sexual transgressions affecting enslaved and manumitted communities, a potentially vast theme if one considers relations between married masters and slaves. But one overarching point should be made. The institutional recognition of slave marriages by ruling elites varied from place to place and from time to time in the early modern Americas, and even varied within the Dutch Atlantic colonies themselves. In New Amsterdam, for example, some slaves were permitted to marry in the church, which was not an option in the Dutch Caribbean. This absence of institutionally recognized marriage may explain why manumitted slaves and their descendants, who came to form a majority of the free populations of Suriname and Curaçao by the turn of the nineteenth century, typically did not marry in a form legally-recognized by either the colonial or municipal governments. The sexual liaisons free black and Eurafrican women commonly cultivated with married white men on Curaçao and in Suriname were public secrets that could not be prosecuted as adultery in the eyes of civil authorities. These facts (much generalized) meant that enslaved and manumitted peoples had a complicated relationship with the legal and informal honor systems that made adultery a meaningful criminal category. In a way, this made individuals of African ancestry neutral parties and perhaps ideal testimony-bearers in legal cases between white parties. More importantly, it placed them squarely within a sexual double standard that continually set them apart from whites and, as we shall see, made them extremely vulnerable witnesses.

Secondly, it bears note that adultery has been prohibited in the majority of human societies, even if sometimes (or often) honored in the breach.<sup>37</sup> In polygynous Central and Western African societies, likewise, adultery was a serious crime, although like the Jewish example above, was defined differently

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34 Joyce Goodfriend, "Black Families in New Netherlands," in *A Beautiful and Fruitful Place: Selected Rensselaerswijck Seminar Papers*, ed. Nancy Anne McClure Zeller (Albany, NY: New Netherland, 1991), 147–55, 149, 151.

35 Cornelis Ch. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast, 1580–1680* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1971), 369 and *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in Surinam, 1791/5–1942* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1990), 310 (for the Dutch colonies).

36 Merry Wiesner-Hanks writes that "race became a marker of marital status, with slave or *mestizo* children simply assumed to be illegitimate." See her *Christianity and Sexuality in the Early Modern World*, 258.

37 George Peter Murdock, *Social Structure*, 265.



than was infidelity in Christian law.<sup>38</sup> Father Giovanni Anntônio Cavazzi seemed to understand both of these points in his ethnographic description of Central Africans in the late seventeenth century. He observed that a married woman with many partners was countenanced “as long as she recognized her husband as her principal lover.”<sup>39</sup> In the vast majority of societies, sex is not exclusively confined to a single relationship whose purpose is reproductive. In short, sex regulation of any type usually does not hinge “on the fact of sex itself,” but rather on the “cooperative relationships upon which social life depends.”<sup>40</sup> In global perspective, then, the single standard of adultery in Western Christendom was only one of the many ways of defining sexual transgression within officially sanctioned relationships.

### Adultery among Jews: The Temporal and Geographical Context

A major preoccupation of Portuguese Jews in Amsterdam in the eighteenth century was heterosexual wrongdoing, particularly adultery and clandestine marriages.<sup>41</sup> Two historians have indicated that adultery was more common among Amsterdam's Portuguese Jews in the eighteenth than in the previous century. Yosef Kaplan, in an article that discusses about a dozen cases of marital infidelity, calls adultery among Amsterdam's Portuguese Jews in the eighteenth century an “extensive phenomenon” and traces its causality to

38 Natalie Zemon Davis, “Judges, Masters, Diviners: Slaves' Experience of Criminal Justice in Colonial Suriname,” *Law and History Review* 29, no. 4 (November 2011): 935–937, 932, citing Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 4, 86; Willem Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea, Divided Into the Gold, the Slave, and the Ivory Coasts* (London: printed for James Knapton, and Dan. Midwinter, 1705), Letter 10, 155; Letter 11, 167–177; Letter 18, 341; Letter 19, 357. Olaudah Equiano, *The interesting narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano: or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by himself* (London: printed and sold for the author, by T. Wilkins, sold also by Mr. Johnson; Mr. Buckland; Messrs Robson and Clark; Mr. Davis; Mr. Matthews [and 3 others in London] and the booksellers in Oxford and Cambridge, [1789]), 35, 37. Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585–1660* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 59. Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, ed. O. Johnson (London: Routledge, 1921), 101.

39 James Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Recreating Culture and Kinship and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441–1770* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 35.

40 George Peter Murdock, *Social Structure*, 264, 260.

41 Yosef Kaplan, “Deviance and Excommunication in the Eighteenth Century,” 103.

ever-growing “tolerance towards sexuality in Western European societies” beginning in the 1670s and “the satisfaction of erotic desires as a central goal in marriage.”<sup>42</sup> Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld, drawing in part on Kaplan’s research, gestures towards “a growing neglect of morality among Dutch Sephardim” in the eighteenth century.<sup>43</sup> But it is imperative not to confuse preoccupations of the governing elite with the actual extent of extramarital dalliances. In the first place, both conclusions are impressionistic: neither is based on a statistical compilation of adulterous incidents in Amsterdam or in a comparative context with other cities and colonies, whether for the Portuguese or Ashkenazi communities, or for Christians. That being said, the argument for an increase in anxiety over marital infidelity among Portuguese Jews in the mid-eighteenth century does find some archival support externally. A statistical profile of adultery as reflected in the aforementioned *Hof van Holland* inventory, for example, shows that 67 cases were recorded in the century and a half between 1597 to 1749, while in less than 50 years (from 1753 to the close of the century) 36 cases were tried.<sup>44</sup>

By contrast, a selective study of marital infidelity based on Amsterdam’s civil and church records indicates a precipitous decline in adultery cases over the course of the eighteenth century.<sup>45</sup> This of course did not mean that *overspel* waned as a phenomenon, only that civil and ecclesiastical authorities developed more pressing priorities, such as the persecution of financial

42 Yosef Kaplan, “Moral Panic in the Eighteenth Century Sephardi Community of Amsterdam: The Threat of Eros,” in *Dutch Jewry: Its History and Secular Culture (1500–2000)*, ed. J. Israel and R. Salverda (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 103–123, 112. Even though he is careful to distinguish between “moral panic” and the actual incidence of the crime, he still gives the impression of an escalation over time by linking eighteenth century adultery to the “cultural and social changes then taking place in the Western European societies,” and by pointing out that poverty from the 1730s and increasing mobility intensified the phenomenon.

43 Tirtsah Levie Bernfeld, “Sephardi Women in Holland’s Golden Age,” 182. Parenthetically, Matt Goldish notes a rise in *responsa* and other documents related to adultery among Jews in Morocco, which (in his words) “might suggest that infidelity and adultery were becoming more common” there among Jews from the mid-eighteenth century. His findings suggest that the rise in documented adultery cases is linked solely to social trends in Western Europe. See Matt Goldish, *Jewish Questions: Responsa on Sephardic Life in the Early Modern Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 136–138.

44 NL-HaNA, Hof van Holland, 3.03.01.01 (authors’ tally), *passim*. Roodenburgh’s analysis of *overspel* in Amsterdam’s Dutch Reformed church shows that adultery cases dramatically peaked during the two decades between 1661 and 1680. Herman Roodenburg, *Onder censuur*, 281.

45 Verhaar and van den Brink, “De bemoeienissen van stad en kerk,” 77 and 92n51.

crime.<sup>46</sup> Until systematic research is undertaken comparing the two centuries beginning in the 1650s and 1750s, it is impossible to say whether either statistical increase or decline is mirrored within the Jewish community.

But what seems to be true for both (often overlapping) worlds is the small incidence of prosecuted adultery – according to one estimate from Amsterdam's church council records, no more than five cases per year on average.<sup>47</sup> As historian Merry Wiesner-Hanks notes, there is “an enormous – and sometimes misleading – gap between rhetoric and reality in almost all aspects of sexual regulation” during the early modern period.<sup>48</sup> In colonial British America, for example, there are almost no cases of adultery despite “harsh denunciations and stringent laws.”<sup>49</sup> Instead, lay individuals and non-ecclesiastical, non-government groups such as guilds, confraternities, and neighborhood groups took part in “policing, denouncing, and investigating sexual conduct.”<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Carolyn Ramsey has found a clear pattern of selective enforcement of adultery laws in England and its North American colonies.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, Herman Roodenburg cautions that his data does not say much about the actual behavior of the members of the church. Members from higher socio-economic positions, he surmises, had the wherewithal to keep their adultery from reaching the consistory, a fact well known among pastors of the congregation.<sup>52</sup> We may then surmise that the cases that did go to trial, whether in Christian or Jewish communities, whether in religious or secular courts, were the tip of the iceberg.

Our own stance, taking into consideration the “imperious drive of sex,” is that marital infidelity was “common” in any age, as one historian of the eighteenth-century Cape also argues, and as a number of scholars writing in broader contexts have long posited.<sup>53</sup> But what “common” is for early

46 Ibid., 79.

47 Ibid., 85.

48 Wiesner-Hanks, *Christianity and Sexuality in the Early Modern World*, 261.

49 Ibid, 262.

50 Ibid.

51 Ramsey, “Sex and Social Order.”

52 Herman Roodenburg, *Onder censuur*, 281.

53 George Peter Murdock, *Social Structure*, 260; Nigel Penn, “The wife, the farmer and the farmer's slaves: Adultery and murder on a frontier society in the early eighteenth century Cape,” *Kronos* 28 (November 2002): 1–20, 1 (Murder and adultery were “common enough crimes in any age”); Brundage, *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church*, 129; W.E.H. Lecky, *History of European Morals*, 2 vols. (New York: George Braziller, 1955), 2: 282; Bronislaw Malinowski, “Parenthood, The Basis of Social Structure,” in *The Family: Its Structure and Function*, ed. Rose Laub Cross (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), 18–19.

modernity can only be quantified in comparison to other contemporaneous transgressions regarded (at least in theory) as equally serious. Yosef Kaplan is therefore right to refocus our attention on attitudes. The reaction of Portuguese Jewish authorities to marital infidelity differed over time qualitatively. Heightened scrutiny and verbosity characterizes trial proceedings from the mid-eighteenth century, and gone were the oblique euphemisms and lenient punishments of the previous century. Finally, we must bear in mind that what Kaplan terms a “moral panic” (the spike in adultery cases beginning in the second half of the eighteenth century) was refracted through the perspective of the community’s secular and religious leaders. The horror at marital infidelity was not always equally shared among the Jewish populace, as the following cases will demonstrate.

### Not Really Adultery: The Fernandes/Bueno de Mesquita Scandal (Suriname, 1775)

In November of 1775, Moses Bueno de Mesquita, a member of the Portuguese Jewish community living in Paramaribo, complained to the regents of the Mahamad that his wife, Deborah, had received frequent visits from her brother-in-law, her sister’s husband, Moses Fernandes. Several times, Mesquita would come home at night to find Fernandes in his (Mesquita’s) bed, complaining of a headache, and Deborah sitting by his side, administering caresses and kisses to his head. After Mesquita forbade Fernandes from ever again entering his house, Deborah began to frequent Fernandes’ house, where her mother lived, returning home sometimes as late as eleven at night. When called to testify, Deborah affirmed the accuracy of her husband’s report, but claimed that the tender displays were innocent and that her husband would have done the same with his own sister-in-law. Moreover, she affirmed, she went to Fernandes’ house in order to visit her mother, and her husband had no right to forbid her from seeing her own brother-in-law. The regents were not convinced by these explanations. Deborah Bueno de Mesquita and Moses Fernandes were both warned, under threat of excommunication (*herem*), not to have further contact with each other, nor to visit each other’s homes.<sup>54</sup>

But the very next day, Deborah Bueno de Mesquita spent the entire day at her brother-in-law’s house. When called before the Mahamad, Moses Fernandes claimed he had tried to bar her entrance, but that she had insisted on visiting her mother. Fernandes was again warned, this time under threat of being

54 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18 inv. nr. 1, November 29, 1775.

handed over the colonial prosecutor.<sup>55</sup> From this point on, an ever-broader swathe of the Portuguese Jewish community became involved. In early December of 1775, Moses Bueno de Mesquita's brother Joseph was informed that someone had spotted the illicit couple together in the home of Joseph Fonseca. The latter testified before the Mahamad that he had permitted the two in his house because he had not yet heard of the ban. When called before the court, the accused Moses Fernandes denied having been in Joseph Fonseca's house with Deborah. But Fonseca's two sons directly contradicted Fernandes' story: they had definitely seen Moses and Deborah together in Joseph Fonseca's house. Having caught Fernandes in his lie, the Mahamad ordered him to the synagogue for formal and public excommunication. No one in the Jewish community, they ruled, would be permitted to interact or deal with him in any way, save for those living in his house, his siblings, and his in-laws.

Later that day, Moses Fernandes' brothers voluntarily presented themselves before the regents, asking that the case be reconsidered, since Moses had repented. Then, Moses Fernandes himself stepped inside the judicial chamber, promising under pain of three forms of rabbinical excommunication (*herem*, *neduy* and *semata*) to no longer speak or interact with Deborah Bueno de Mesquita.<sup>56</sup> He was ordered to bring in a "request of submission" and to present it before the regents during their scheduled meeting in Jodensavanne, a Jewish village in the colony's interior that served as the community's administrative and cultural center. He did so, but in an entirely unsatisfactory way, continuing in his denial of any wrongdoing, recanting his written "submission," and persisting in his claim that the physical contact between him and his sister-in-law was purely of a medical nature. Remarkably, despite his disingenuous denial, the Mahamad refrained from excommunicating him, and merely condemned him to a public apology at the synagogue altar in Paramaribo, a mandate to grow out his beard for six months, obligatory attendance at synagogue during morning and afternoon prayers, a seating assignment in the bench behind the altar, and a fine of 200 guilders (in addition, of course, to the interdiction against communicating with his sister-in-law in any way).<sup>57</sup>

The balance of power seemed to tilt in Moses Bueno de Mesquita's direction, for by 1777, his brother Joseph was serving as First Parnas, and made some attempts to protect Moses' reputation.<sup>58</sup> But as this case unfolded, the power

55 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, November 30, 1775.

56 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, December 5, 1775.

57 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, December 6, 1775. These were common sanctions in Portuguese Jewish communities.

58 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, July 8, 1777. An important note: the assumption that First Parnas Joseph Bueno de Mesquita was the

of the people alternately tipped the scale in and against the favor of the cuckolded husband. We hear nothing further of the Bueno de Mesquita/Fernandes case until a year and a half later, in July 1777. At this point, both the Eurafrikan and Ashkenazi sectors of the Jewish community became involved. Reuben Mendez Meza, a *congregante* who would several years later be at the center of a Eurafrikan struggle for first-tier status in the Portuguese Jewish community, was called forward as a witness, along with Semuel de Isaac Cohen Nassy, both of whom were rumored to have information about the recursive relationship between Moses and Deborah.<sup>59</sup> It was revealed that the pair had harbored themselves in the homes of Ashkenazim, Jews of Central and European descent whose communal members had first trickled into the colony at the very end of the seventeenth century, and who comprised a substantial proportion of the Jewish community by the close of the following century.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps the leaking of the situation into another Jewish community – and one that occupied a lower social status than Portuguese Jews – was the straw that broke the camel's back. The regents put their collective foot down: Moses Fernandes was handed down the harshest form of excommunication: *herem*. In a near repetition of the drama that first unfolded two years previously, Fernandes disingenuously claimed that he did not realize the interdiction against meeting with his sister-in-law was still in effect. He declared himself repentant and begged the regents to rescind the decree against him, which they did. The same penalty was applied: Fernandes was made to ask for forgiveness at the synagogue altar, grow out his beard until the eve of the Jewish new year, pay a fine of 200 guilders, and once again, have no form of communication with Deborah Bueno de Mesquita. But this time the regents were no fools: they also banished Fernandes from Paramaribo, where his sister-in-law resided, for the period of one year.

Banishment was a typical legal response to convicted adulterers in both the United Provinces and the overseas territories. This raises the question of why the regents were so slow in resolutely enacting territorial excommunication (*herem ha-makom*). The Mahamad's extreme pains to cover up the case

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same man as the Joseph Bueno de Mesquita cited is tentative, given the repetitive nature of first and family names among the colony's Jews.

59 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, July 8, 1777. In the Portuguese Jewish communities of Brazil, Curaçao, and Suriname, a *congregante* was typically either a Jew of African ancestry or a white Jew demoted to second-tier status because of marriage to a Jew of African provenance. A *jahid* was a first-tier member of the Jewish community by virtue of white status.

60 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, July 21, 1777.

(they quickly resolved to gather and seal up all relevant papers) and, moreover, the lengths they went to protect Deborah from any exposure is an interesting reversal of the usually heavier weight an adulterous relationship laid on the shoulders of women in rabbinical sources.<sup>61</sup> We tentatively suggest that the deciding factor in targeting Moses Fernandes and not his consort was to protect the honor and economic position of the wealthy Bueno de Mesquita family, one of whose members was then heading the Mahamad.<sup>62</sup> As the intense archival research on British North America has shown, defendants from affluent and respected families tended to escape infidelity allegations entirely or with only lightly applied punishment. But another unspoken intention may have been at play in protecting Deborah Bueno de Mesquita from a greater degree public censure: the desire to avoid the humiliating exposure of Moses Bueno de Mesquita as a cuckolded husband, a status that could suggest his inability to control or sexually satisfy his wife.<sup>63</sup>

If anything, the relatively quietist tactics to protect the reputation of a highly placed family backfired, for Moses Fernandes and Deborah Bueno de Mesquita continued to publicly flaunt both their relationship and the regents' authority.<sup>64</sup> To make matters worse for the regents, the forbidden couple rebuffed the Mahamad's disciplining actions and brought the case before the municipal authorities. In August of 1777, about two weeks after the second excommunication, Moses Bueno de Mesquita's brother Joseph Bueno de Mesquita proposed convening an extraordinary session (*junta*) of the Mahamad in order to reopen the sealed case. For the first time in the communal records, the regents called Moses Fernandes (but not Deborah Bueno de Mesquita) "incestuous and adulterous."<sup>65</sup> In an interesting tactical reversal, Joseph Bueno de Mesquita argued that adultery had never occurred. Joseph

61 Ibid; Fram, "Two Cases of Adultery," 280.

62 Although we do not yet have biographical details for this family, *Parnassim* were by definition wealthy; their positions were unpaid and their status came from wealth.

63 For a related discussion see Ramsey, "Sex and Social Order," 205–207. This pattern – the brunt of adultery being borne by the male offender – seems to be a reverse of the seventeenth century anecdotes cited in Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers*: 345–346. Likewise, it is different from the conclusions of Merry Wiesner-Hanks, who has commented that in the early modern Christian world, undisciplined sexuality was most often punished in women. Wiesner-Hanks, *Christianity and Sexuality in the Early Modern World*, 260.

64 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, July 21, 1777.

65 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, August 7, 1777.

presented an appeal before the governor, arguing against the resolutions of the Mahamad and describing the regents as partial judges (*juezes parsiais*) who transgressed both divine and political laws. The other regents were infuriated.<sup>66</sup> The Mahamad sentenced Joseph for flaunting its authority, but he refused to comply, and insulted the Jewish judges with “scandalous words.” The Mahamad resolved to excommunicate him and, if that did not work, to have him expelled from the colony as a disturber of public order. On further consideration, the Mahamad decided to avoid these measures in order to “indulge his family, who would suffer from the opprobrium of *herem* or great prejudice of banishment.” The regents resolved to forever strip Joseph of his honorific charge as former Parnas (*adjunto*) and, unless he complied with his sentence by the upcoming Passover holiday, to demote him to the status of *congregante*, a second-tier social position typically reserved for black and Eurafrikan Jews.<sup>67</sup>

Meanwhile, Moses Fernandes and Deborah Bueno de Mesquita continued to see each other, on one occasion concealing themselves in the house of the Ashkenazi Joseph Jacobs Polak. In fact, Moses was spotted there sporting the beard he grew out as punishment, per order of the Mahamad.<sup>68</sup> What followed was a wild goose chase for witnesses who refused to testify against Moses Fernandes and, in some cases, even to appear. Some – evidently aware of Joseph’s protective tactics on behalf of his cuckolded brother and straying sister-in-law – claimed they were obligated to testify only before the colonial authorities, while others feigned illness or family crisis. The Mahamad was left empty handed and looking foolish. Collectively, these passive-aggressive behaviors challenged the Mahamad’s authority, protected Fernandes and his paramour, preserved the official reputation of the Bueno de Mesquita family, and wore out the regents through prolonged delaying tactics. In the end, as with many other legal disputes in Suriname and Curaçao, when Jews resorted to the “gentile court,” the colonial authorities sided with the appealing Jewish defendants – in this case, Moses Fernandes and Deborah Bueno de Mesquita. But internally, the case was not really resolved – the communal minutes never mention a final decision. The last we hear of the affair is in August of 1779, when prosecutor Wichers informed the Mahamad that he wanted all the papers concerning the Fernandes/Mesquita case. The Mahamad, reluctantly,

66 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 8, September 16 and 25; October 7, November 5, 1777.

67 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 8, December 31, 1777.

68 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, January 1, 1778.



eventually submitted all of the relevant papers.<sup>69</sup> In this example of the language of silence, two well-placed elite white families – in apparent collusion with their Jewish neighbors and colonial rulers – succeeded in preserving their economic standing and reputations, and two ardent lovers triumphed in indulging their affair.<sup>70</sup>

There are a few indications that what was at stake for the Mahamad was not an infringement of Jewish law in a rather sensitive area of family life and sexuality, nor the presence of a pair of adulterers in a nominally Protestant Reformed colony. The heart of the matter became for the Mahamad the threat to its judicial authority. The formula of confession and apology dictated to Fernandes was generic and identical to those prescribed to infringers of non-sexual laws. Fernandes' confession and apology did not even force him to pronounce the word "adultery." Rather, he was simply obliged to acknowledge he had incurred the punishment of *herem* for repeatedly transgressing the orders of the Mahamad. He was told to declare himself both God-fearing and an obedient *jahid* (first-tier member of the Jewish community).<sup>71</sup> But it was clear that the latter mattered more, for he was not required to ask forgiveness of God, even though the Mahamad acknowledged several times that his was a crime against both civil law (*humanindade*) and the Jewish religion (*nostra ley*). The principle concern of the colonial rulers, by contrast, seems to have been protecting a wealthy, leading white family in a colony whose majority population was both enslaved and of African origin.

Our conclusions here are very much in consonance with the findings of Carolyn Ramsey in her comparative study of early modern England and its overseas North American colonies. The Fernandes/Bueno de Mequita scandal provides a Caribbean example of a deeply rooted popular culture that delimited the efficacy of legal codification. As Ramsey argues for colonial North America and early modern England: these popular values "did not always correspond to those urged by formal legal institutions and – particularly in the area of sexuality – popular custom tolerated de facto unions that did not threaten the stability of the community."<sup>72</sup> As in the Suriname trial, Ramsey found that the English and colonial courts consistently failed "to impose severe

69 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, February 20, 1779; August 26, 1779; inv. nr. 8, March 15, 1779.

70 The sources do not mention a divorce between any of the married couples, and Fernandes' wife does not appear in the recorded proceedings.

71 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, July 21, 1777.

72 Ramsey, "Sex and Social Order," 203.

sentences on high-status sexual offenders.”<sup>73</sup> In England, only three people were executed for the crime of adultery during the Interregnum, for juries simply refused to convict defendants unless one of them was “an unpopular individual like a Catholic priest.”<sup>74</sup> If the Fernandes/Bueno de Mesquita case is representative of a broader tendency in Europe and the colonial Americas, as we suspect it is, then status and reputation were more important “in determining the vulnerability of suspects to prosecution for sexual offenses.”<sup>75</sup> The official gravity of the crime of adultery played only a secondary role. Wealth or lack thereof, economic dependence, religious or political dissidence, and race – as we shall see more dramatically in the following cause célèbre – ultimately determined whether or not one was judged guilty in cases of marital infidelity.

### Imputed Adultery: The Vulnerability of Eurafrican Jews in Suriname (1775)

For Eurafrican Jews, bringing forth an adultery accusation was extremely risky. Eurafrican Jews formed a sub-community within the Portuguese Jewish nation of Suriname, and had grown to some 10 percent by the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>76</sup> They typically traced their ancestry to a white Portuguese Jewish man and his (non-Jewish) African slave, but by the second half of the eighteenth century many were born to enslaved or manumitted Eurafrican Jewish women. Eurafrican Jews had to exert great caution in referencing the crime of adultery, as Moses Rodrigues del Prado discovered in the 1770s. It all began in 1775 when another Eurafrican Jew living on the savannah,<sup>77</sup> Abraham Garsia, protested against rumored allegations that he had insulted the sexual virtue of Ribca de la Parra, described variably as “a noted lady...from a family so

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73 Ibid., 219.

74 Ibid., 219.

75 Ibid., 220.

76 Aviva Ben-Ur, “A Matriarchal Matter: Slavery, Conversion, and Upward Mobility in Colonial Suriname,” in *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism, 1500–1800*, ed. Richard L. Kagan and Philip D. Morgan, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 152–69 and 270–279, where I estimate 7 percent; my subsequent archival research increases this to 10 percent.

77 The savannah (Portuguese: *savana*; Dutch: *savanne*) was a large stretch of the Suriname River dominated by plantations owned by Portuguese Jews. At its center was Jodensavanne, a Jewish village commonly known in Dutch sources as “Jodensavanne.”

esteemed" and a "white woman." The Mahamad's investigation uncovered a tortuous chain of rumors transmitted mostly from man to man. Garsia, backed up by a number of other Jewish witnesses, displaced the blame squarely onto the shoulders of Moses Rodrigues del Prado.<sup>78</sup> Prado (d. October 3, 1797), the third son of the "mulatta" Maria or Mariana del Prado, was classified in the Portuguese Jewish community as a *congregante*.<sup>79</sup>

After calling witnesses and finding Prado to be the guilty party, the Mahamad swiftly resolved to banish him from the savannah forever, a measure never before or after meted out to a white Jew similarly convicted.<sup>80</sup> In speaking of a white Jewish woman as an adulteress (if he was indeed culpable), Prado clearly hit a raw nerve. During his trial Prado was ordered to "behave humbly and recognize the prodigious difference between him and whites." The regents decided that banishment from Jodensavanne was not harsh enough a penalty and resolved to ask the governor to apply corporal punishment, a deep insult, for its recipients in the Jewish community were almost always either parents ordered to discipline their children or, much more frequently, slaves. Banishment and physical correction were in this case intended to underscore the vast social gulf between whites and free Eurafricans in Suriname's Jewish community. Class was also at issue. The alleged adultress, Ribca de la Parra, the widow of Selomoh de la Parra, was an elite white Jewish woman publicly active in the community in crucial ways. In 1770, a group of Portuguese Jewish volunteers including Ribca, collectively donated the massive sum of 10,000 Dutch guilders to rebuild the Sedek VeSalom synagogue, a building in dire need of expansion following a huge population move from the savannah to Paramaribo.<sup>81</sup> What is also key is that Prado seems not have had any effective network to rally to his side – at least not then.

Three years later, in December of 1778, Moses Rodrigues del Prado returned unlawfully to the savannah, brandishing a sword and accompanied by two body servants (*moleques*) armed with pistols.<sup>82</sup> When the beadle (*samas*) ordered him to leave the savannah, Prado answered that he had come to carry out some

78 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 135, September 29, 1775.

79 Ibid., entry for "Mosseh Rodrigues del Prado (congregante)," died October 3, 1797, p. 25; NL-HaNA, Suriname: Oud Notarieel Archief (SONA), 1.05.11.14, inv. nr. 57, "de vrije mulatin Maria de Prado" or Mariana del Prado, June 12, 1787, pp. 460 ff.

80 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1 May 8; June 17; June 25, 1777; inv. nr. 2, June 26 and October 9, 1782; and June 25 and 26, 1782.

81 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, April 18, 1770.

82 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, December 7, 1778.

business affairs and that he would leave when finished. Then, reportedly without incitement, Prado began to shout through the streets that the judges who sat on his case years before had been biased, and that if any one of them had the guts, Prado would fight them. As the community's treasurer, Samuel de la Parra, was passing by, Prado approached him with one of his body servants, who extended an unsheathed sword. De la Parra preempted an attack by grabbing the sword from the servant's hand and called for a patrol to arrest Prado.

There are several indications that Prado's visit to the savannah was not to carry out business, but rather to rectify injustice. Moreover, Prado was clearly taking his strategic cues from the white Jewish community. Note that Joseph, brother of the cuckolded Moses Bueno de Mesquita, had similarly accused the Mahamad's regents of being partial when they resisted Joseph's attempts to have the adultery trial dismissed. In addition, since his initial conviction, Prado had actively cultivated a powerful network of supporters. Just before launching his attack, he told a resident of the savannah (who asked him to leave) that he, Prado, was well known by the governor as a *homem de bem*, a Portuguese term that implies good behavior, wealth and philanthropy, and political power all at once. The regents evidently scoffed at Prado's claim, for they sent a request to the governor to detain him in the Zeeland fort in Paramaribo.

The very next day, however, Prado's bravado proved to be more than a bluff. His boss, Benjamin Robles de Medina, having received notice of Prado's arrest, informed the regents that Prado was the director of his plantation and that this estate would suffer much damage should Prado be detained any longer in prison. Furthermore, Medina explained that Prado's inebriated state was to blame for the "liberty" with which he acted in the Jewish village. The regents agreed to release Prado, on condition that his behavior in the future prove him deserving of liberty from prison.<sup>83</sup> In February 1779, two months after Prado's attack, the regents sent a report about Prado to the colony's prosecutor.<sup>84</sup> To the regents' shock, the Court of Policy ruled in favor of Prado, declaring that the Mahamad did not have authority to banish any person from Jodensavanne, despite the Mahamad having shown a document dating to 1757 from the then governor (likely Jan Nepveu), that conferred upon the regents the power of expulsion. Moreover, the court decided not to punish Prado for insulting the Mahamad.<sup>85</sup>

Moses Rodrigues del Prado had clearly done his homework. He understood that protecting himself against libel meant networking, and that networking

83 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, December 8, 1778.

84 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, February 1, 1779.

85 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, February 20, 1779.

meant identifying oneself with wealth and power. The governor's favorable response to Prado's plight may be an indication of Prado's own growing economic fortunes. Elsewhere in the communal minutes, in an unrelated context, a number of Jews in 1779 complained to the regents that Jews "of modest means" could not address their complaints to the colonial ruler,<sup>86</sup> presumably for lack of clout or monetary inducement. Finally, it is probably not a coincidence that Moses Rodrigues del Prado's return to the savannah coincided in time with deliberations over the ongoing adulterous relationship between Moses Fernandes and Deborah Bueno de Mesquita. We suggest that Prado was stung by the patently exaggerated treatment he received for allegedly uttering an accusation of adultery (rather than perpetuating the crime itself). Prado's successful campaign for justice not only foreshadowed, but possibly informed, the Eurafrican protest that emerged in Suriname beginning in the late 1780s, against their second-tier status in the Jewish community.<sup>87</sup>

### In Full View: A Cause Célèbre in Curaçao (1775)

Every once in a while, a well-documented case provides us with a framework through which to view issues shaping the dynamics of a community or even of a society as a whole. Such a case occurred in 1775, when the Portuguese Jewish community of Curaçao was rocked by a bitter dispute involving allegations of sexual misconduct. The witnesses included a broad swathe of colonial society: housewives, merchants, doctors, colonial officials, slaves, and free people of color. Witnesses were asked to reveal their personal knowledge of the situation and also to repeat hearsay. The case threatened the social cohesion of the community and reminds us that close-knit communities could be rife with suspicions and simmering conflicts. It is another example of how relatively clear-cut cases of adultery in the Dutch colonies could be manipulated in the defendants' favor.

The charges were dramatic and highly salacious by any standard. Sarah de Isaac Pardo was pregnant, but the paternity of her unborn child was the subject of much speculation in the Portuguese Jewish community, among its

86 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, October 25, 1779.

87 See Aviva Ben-Ur, "Peripheral Inclusion: Communal Belonging in Suriname's Sephardic Community," in *Religion, Gender, and Culture in the Pre-modern World*, ed. Alexandra Cuffel and Brian Britt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 185–210 and her *Jewish Autonomy in a Slave Society*, in progress.

slaves and servants, and even among the white Protestants on the island. In more than ten years of marriage, Sarah had never before been known to be pregnant.<sup>88</sup> Her much older husband, Selomoh Vaz Farro, was now gravely ill and had been for some time – so ill that the couple had twice been granted a conditional divorce in the preceding year by Haham da Fonseca in expectation of Vaz Farro's imminent demise.<sup>89</sup> How was it, then, that an elderly man on his deathbed – whom two doctors had declared impotent – could impregnate his wife?

Vaz Farro claimed in a sworn statement that, one evening several months earlier, he had “found the strength” to have relations with his wife.<sup>90</sup> But this seemed unlikely to many within and outside the Portuguese Jewish community. Instead, suspicion immediately fell on Abraham de David da Costa Andrade, Jr. After all, Sarah and Abraham had frequently been spotted in each other's company. This in itself was not particularly shocking. As we have seen in the affair between Moses Fernandes and Deborah Bueno de Mesquita in Suriname, a certain degree of intimacy between married people of opposite genders was permitted in a closely-knit community in which nearly everyone was related by blood or marriage. But Sarah and Abraham seem to have pushed the limits of what was allowable by community standards. They were observed talking together on the porches of houses, exchanging small tokens such as flowers. Many witnesses had regularly spotted the pair strolling together outside the city gates. According to a few testimonies, Sarah and Abraham had even arranged rendezvous during the small hours of the morning. Gossip about their relationship was rife and there was plenty of material to work with.<sup>91</sup>

The frequency with which the two were sighted together, their obvious familiarity with one another, and Sarah's suspicious pregnancy, flouted community norms and eventually incited censure. Sexual conduct was perhaps the single most important piece of information about a third party, as one deponent testified. Gossip related to intimate behavior, he asserted, had always

88 NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie (NWIC), 1.05.01.02, inv. nr. 223.

89 This divorce would have freed Sarah of the obligation to contract a levirate marriage to her brother-in-law. Apparently, Vaz Farro had recovered sufficiently enough for Fonseca to revoke the first conditional divorce decree. When Vaz Farro's condition worsened again, Fonseca issued a second divorce decree. Conditional divorce decrees in the Portuguese Jewish communities of both Curaçao and Suriname had mandatory expiration dates; hence the necessity for two decrees in Vaz Farro's case.

90 NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie (NWIC), 1.05.01.02, , inv. nr. 223:1, 10, 30v; 26:1.

91 NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie (NWIC), 1.05.01.02, inv. nr. 223:1, 11, 42, 50; 2:1, 41; 29, 1; 30, 1.

circulated in Curaçao, whether among men or women, or between Jews, Protestants, slaves, or free people of color.<sup>92</sup> In the Pardo/Andrade scandal, free people of color played a central role in information transmission. Even those unrelated to the families in question enjoyed a detailed familiarity with the case.<sup>93</sup> In fact, Samuel d'Costa Andrade learned of his brother's suspected adultery when he overheard two black women gossiping in a narrow Willemstad passageway.<sup>94</sup> Other deponents admitted that they had listened in on conversations about the scandal from blacks circulating in the marketplace and on the streets.<sup>95</sup> All of this brings to the fore one of the main features of this case: the entanglement of enslaved and manumitted peoples in the daily life of whites, a contrast to the Surinamese cases earlier examined, where slaves are virtually non-existent in the surviving documentation. This contrast is perhaps unsurprising, given the geographical situation. Willemstad was a small walled city barely containing upwards of 11,500 inhabitants, who by the mid-eighteenth century had begun to spill beyond its gates and into neighborhoods such as Otrabanda.<sup>96</sup> In the testimony, people of color emerge as major actors and information transmitters. Informally, they absorbed and spread gossip across communal boundaries, and white Portuguese Jews sometimes called on them to transmit messengers between the lovers. Sarah Pardo, for example, gave a letter to Antonia, a free black girl, to deliver to Abraham, who returned his own response via a slave girl. On other occasions, enslaved and free people of color played advisory roles to the parties involved, as we shall see. Clearly, these individuals occupied a central role in the Pardo and Andrade families, indicating not just intimacy and trust, but also influence.

After her second conditional divorce from her dying husband, Sarah Pinto moved back to her father's house. However, Isaac Pardo's ploy of putting an end to his daughter's "shameless" conduct failed, for Sarah continued to visit

92 NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie (NWIC), 1.05.01.02, 223:2, 32.

93 Ibid., 223:1, 29; 2, 4–8, 10; 4, 1; 5, 102; 15, 3; 29, 1–2; 30, 1–2.

94 Ibid., 223:29, 1–2.

95 Ibid., 223:15, 4–5; 30, 1–2.

96 Wim Klooster, "Curaçao as a Transit Center to the Spanish Main and the French West Indies" in this volume. Klooster estimates that by the middle of the eighteenth century, the number of Jewish families in Willemstad was nearly half that of white non-Jews. Based on WIC tax records, Klooster believes that by 1789 there were about 6000 free residents in Willemstad, which included free blacks and "coloureds," most of whom were Catholics, as well as 2469 Protestants and 1095 Jews. See his "Jews in Suriname and Curaçao" in *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe. The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450–1800*, ed. Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering (New York: Berghahn, 2001), 350–368, 353, 355.

with Abraham Andrade *sub rosa*.<sup>97</sup> This he learned during the humiliating visit of Mrs. Clements, a prominent Protestant widow, who told him of his daughter's inappropriate conduct on the streets of Willemstad, a visit that illustrates how racial solidarity amongst whites overcame religious divides.<sup>98</sup> Similar embarrassing social calls caused the situation at home to deteriorate; Sarah and her father were heard arguing loudly and frequently. Both friends and the family's domestic slaves attempted to broker a peaceful solution to this untenable situation. At last, Isaac Pardo's good friend Dr. Joseph Capriles, seconded by Pardo's "house slaves," persuaded Sarah to move into a residence outside the city gates which was owned by her father.<sup>99</sup> The house slaves, although nameless, are listed alongside Capriles – Isaac Pardo's long-time family friend, business partner, and prominent fellow Portuguese Jew – as key participants in persuading Sarah to change her domicile.<sup>100</sup>

Free people of color, referred to as *mulatos*, also appear in positions of intimacy or even friendship with Sarah Pardo and Abraham Andrade and other Portuguese Jews. Sarah was well enough acquainted with an unidentified mulatto woman whom she met on the streets to declare: "Everyone says I'm pregnant...I'm going to walk the streets now to show them that I'm not!"<sup>101</sup> Sarah also discussed with this woman her feelings for her ailing husband. She had "been hoping for two or three years for her husband to die...or for lightning to strike him."<sup>102</sup> That these statements were made to a *mulato* woman and that no one in the ensuing civil and religious litigation seemed surprised is again indicative of a level of familiarity between the free colored and Portuguese Jewish populations that has not heretofore been explored for Curaçao's Jewish community.<sup>103</sup>

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97 Ibid., 223:2, 7–10.

98 Ibid., 223:2, 14–16.

99 Ibid., 223:2, 9–10.

100 Dr. Joseph Capriles was a prominent member of the Portuguese Jewish community on Curaçao. He was listed as one of the wealthiest members of the community in 1769. See Issac S. Emmanuel and Suzanne A. Emmanuel, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles* 2 vols., (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1970), I:255. He owned at least one ship, *La Dorada*, valued at 800 pesos. NL-HaNA, Curaçao, Bonaire en Aruba tot 1828, 1.05.12.01, inv. nr. 891, 395.

101 NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie (NWIC), 1.05.01.02, 223:4, 1.

102 Ibid.

103 There is obviously secondary literature that discusses sexual liaisons between white Portuguese Jewish fathers and non-Jewish women of color, but these sources highlight the sexual and financial utility of such relations and do not consider friendship or trust. See, for example, Eva Abraham-Van der Mark, "Marriage and Concubinage among the



It was a slave girl who transmitted to Isaac Pardo the love letters that would become centerpieces in the trial against Sara Pardo and Abraham Andrade. According to Pardo père, these letters “came into my hands...from a black girl I came across.”<sup>104</sup> These incriminating love letters were written in the island’s Creole language, commonly known today as Papiamentu, but in the sources referred to as *neger spraak* (Negro speech). They were especially damning, for they provided actual evidence of an extra-marital affair and compelled the *parnassim* of the synagogue to act, in part because the contents of the letters had become so widely known to both Jews and non-Jews in the city. These letters – the oldest known documents written in Papiamentu – formed the lynchpin of the various accusations against the couple. It was in these letters that both the pregnancy and the attempt to abort the fetus were acknowledged.<sup>105</sup>

After these compromising epistles were made public, one of Sarah’s brothers threw Andrade out of the synagogue.<sup>106</sup> In fact, feelings against him were running so high that Andrade had to request an armed escort from the governor in order to arrive home safely.<sup>107</sup> Sarah and Abraham claimed that they were innocent of the charges and that the adultery accusation was a conspiracy against them. They initially attempted to evade the *parnassim* when called to answer for their suspected crimes. Sarah Pardo disingenuously claimed several times that she did not realize she had been charged with a crime. Andrade’s family also avoided appearing before the Mahamad. His father feigned illness, while his brothers suddenly found pressing business to attend to off the island. When Sarah and Abraham eventually came before the Mahamad and were confronted with the letters they had sent to one another, they claimed them forgeries. Shortly thereafter, the *haham* and

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Sephardic Merchant Elite of Curaçao,” in *Women and Change in the Caribbean: A Pan-Caribbean Perspective*, ed. Janet Henshall Momsen (London: James Currey, 1993), 38–49.

104 This chain of transmission is related in NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie (NWIC), 1.05.01.02, 223:2, 7–10.

105 Sarah wrote that she had sent her slave, a woman called Xica, to a Spanish doctor named Manuel de Estrada to procure an abortifacient. NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie (NWIC), 1.05.01.02, 223:11, 1–2; 13, 1. Estrada later declared under oath that he was surprised that Sarah “trusted a black woman in business of such importance.” Ibid., 223:11, 1–2. When Estrada refused Xica, Abraham paid him a visit himself and was given certain herbs to end the pregnancy. NL-HaNA, *ibid.*, 223: 11, 1–2; 12, 1. Andrade’s attempt to procure abortifacients for his lover was a common response to an unplanned and possibly incriminating pregnancy.

106 NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie (NWIC), 1.05.01.02, 223: 23, 1–2 (October 1, 1775).

107 Ibid.

*parnassim* formally accused Andrade of committing adultery with Sarah and excommunicated both parties. Andrade was ordered to ask for forgiveness at the synagogue altar, grow out his beard for six weeks, sit on a special bench in the synagogue, pay a fine of 200 guilders, and have no form of communication with Sarah Pardo. In an interesting departure from the Bueno de Mesquita/Fernandes case in Suriname, Sarah, though not required to make the public penances in the synagogue like Andrade, did have to pay an equal amount to the charity fund, and it was Sarah that congregation president David Morales sought to have banished from the island, not Andrade.<sup>108</sup>

The reason for this harsher treatment could possibly be rooted in the family history.<sup>109</sup> Isaac Pardo had been one of the first community members excommunicated by Haham de Sola in the community-wide conflict that rocked the island two decades earlier. This dispute was, in many ways, a continuation of other, long-running, conflicts within the Curaçaoan community. Like so many of the quarrels that plagued eighteenth-century Portuguese Jews in Curaçao, the case of 20 years before centered on delimiting the powers of the *haham* and *parnassim*. Disagreement arose when there was talk of building a new synagogue that would compete with the pioneering Mikvé Israel. Two “opposition” leaders, Moses Penso and David Aboab, and those who supported them, including Isaac Pardo, were excommunicated.<sup>110</sup>

Like Moses Fernandes and Deborah Bueno de Mesquita of Suriname, Abraham and Sarah resorted to civil authorities to find in their favor. Andrade hired the lawyer Petrus Bernardus van Starckenborgh, who would later become interim governor of Curaçao, to defend him against the charges. On July 3, 1776, the governor and Council acquitted Andrade and Sarah and ordered the *parnassim* to remove the excommunications, annul the fines, and have the son who was born to Sarah circumcised without discrimination (without the

108 These events are detailed in NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie (NWIC), 1.05.01.02, 223:1, 1–25.

109 For a similar interpretation of underlying causes of interpersonal disputes see Sullivan, *The Punishment of Crime in Colonial New York*, 112–113.

110 For discussion of the case see, NL-HaNA, Old Archive of Curaçao, 1.05.12.01, inv. nr. 825, 863/139; 1528; 818/47; 863/423; 867/79, 211; 180/132; 183/27; 821; NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02 (NWIC), inv. nr. 243/53–61; 70–83; 135–136; 180–182; 316; 596/1261; 597/584; 765a-68; 596/1261; 403; 357/15; Jessica Vance Roitman “A flock of wolves instead of sheep’: The Dutch West India Company, Conflict Resolution, and the Jewish Community of Curaçao in the Eighteenth Century,” in *The Jews in the Caribbean*, ed. Jane Gerber (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013), 85–105; and Emmanuel and Emmanuel, *History of the Jews*, 1:183–212.

omission of certain words pronounced for sons of fathers leading moral lives).<sup>111</sup> As in the Suriname case, the *parnassim* were ordered to seal all papers referring to Sarah and Andrade.<sup>112</sup>

Centuries later, the guilt of Abraham de David da Costa Andrade, Jr. and Sarah Pardo hardly matters. What makes the case interesting today is the vivid light it throws on the social dynamics among the island's various population groups and polities. The Dutch colonial authorities' involvement in the case magnified long-standing tensions between Jewish communal autonomy and colonial hegemony. The intricate workings of the case as it darted to and from the judicial authorities confirm what legal historian Bastiaan van der Velden has noted about Jewish law on the Dutch island of Curaçao: that it often worked alongside the colonial system of secular justice.<sup>113</sup> We may now refine that observation. The Andrade/Pardo controversy illustrates that in the Dutch colonies there were actually three layers of legislation and judicial systems: that of the metropole, that of the colonial authorities, and that of the Jewish community. Our research shows that these three legal systems were not just parallel to each other – they were in conversation, though Jewish law was in most cases clearly subordinate, and often subordinated by Jews themselves. We may also perceive how information was transmitted within the Portuguese Jewish community and contemplate the far-reaching and decisive role of

111 NL-HaNA, Curaçao, Bonaire en Aruba tot 1828, 1.05.12.01, inv. nr. 916, 20; inv. nr. 918, 206, 208–210; inv. nr. 920, 315–316, 471; inv. nr. 921, 150–151, 164, 226.

112 Nevertheless, the *parnassim* let the excommunication stand. In fact, David Morales, president of the community, tried to have Sarah banished from Curaçao, but the governor refused to comply. Public prosecutor Hubertus Coerman, who had been chief of police since 1773, also disagreed with the governor and the island Council and took the case to the States General of Holland. But the States General found for Sarah and Andrade on January 13, 1778. Prosecutor Coerman demanded a reversal. Andrade won again. The Amsterdam *parnassim* removed the excommunication immediately. On July 31, 1780, the Curaçao *parnassim* were ordered to circumcise the child—who was now nearly five years old—like all legitimate Jewish sons. They were also ordered to pay Andrade's costs to the enormous sum of 60,493;2 Dutch guilders. The argument over the payment of the costs dragged on until 1794. Abraham Andrade eventually moved to Jamaica and Sarah Pardo remarried and left for St. Thomas. See SAA, 1156 (Portugees-Israëlietische Gemeente Curaçao), inv. nr. 44, unpaginated; SAA, 334 (Archief van de Portugees-Israëlietische Gemeente), inv. nr. 95 ("copiador de cartas" – copies of outgoing letters, 1773–1784), 184, 237, 286, 323; 22 ("Compendio de escamoth" – Resolutions, 1728–1814), 171, 199, 229–230, 254, 268.

113 Bastiaan D. van der Velden, *Ik lach met Grotius, en alle die prullen van boeken: Een rechtsge-schiedenis van Curaçao* (Amsterdam: SWP, 2011), 227.

gossip. And we get a glimpse of the pivotal role of the colored population, whether enslaved or free, in one of the island's major scandals.

Another remarkable feature of the adultery case of Abraham Andrade and Sarah Pardo is linguistic. As Portuguese Jews from families that had been on the island of Curaçao for generations, they might have been expected to communicate with each other in Portuguese, the language of most of the synagogue's records and of their ethno-religious community, or in Dutch, the language of colonial authority. Instead, they wrote and apparently spoke to each other in Papiamentu, a Caribbean Creole that emerged from Iberian and African languages. The love letters of Sarah and Abraham are generally agreed to be the first written evidence of Papiamentu, though the language was probably fairly well-established by the mid-eighteenth century and spoken much earlier.<sup>114</sup>

At least six of the witnesses in the scandal, including Jews, gave their testimony in what was termed "neegers Spraake" (Negro speech). Sometimes, the testimony was transcribed in "creoolles taal" (Creole language), presumably a synonym.<sup>115</sup> The fact that Portuguese Jews, many or most of them well-to-do merchants, and their spouses, seemingly felt more comfortable in giving their testimony in Papiamentu than in either Portuguese or Dutch demonstrates how the language had begun to cross socio-economic, racial, religious and ethnic lines. Many witnesses who gave their testimony in Dutch revealed their knowledge of Papiamentu by repeating the conversations between blacks they had overheard on the streets.<sup>116</sup> But, of course, it was not just the blacks on the streets conversing in Papiamentu. A rather large number of white witnesses reported hearing a discussion between Sarah, her husband, and parents which was conducted, these witnesses reported, entirely in Papiamentu.<sup>117</sup> In marked

114 Linda Rupert, *Contraband and Creolization: Curaçao in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 214. Chapter 6 discusses aspects of creolization and Papiamentu. Jesuit Father Alexius Schabel noted that the blacks on the island spoke in their own language as early as 1704. Alexius Schabel, "Dagboek-Fragment van Pater Michael Alexius Schabel Societatis Jesu Missionaris op het eiland Curaçao loopend van 21 October 1707 tot 4 Februari 1708," NL-HaNA and W.M.J. Brada, *Pater Schabel S.J. 1704–1713* (Willemstad: s.n, 1965?). We thank Gert Oostindie these references.

115 NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie (NWIC), 1.05.01.02, 223:3 (testimony of Jacob Aboab Cardoso and Benjamin Aboab Cardoso); 4 (testimony of Jacob Henriques Fereira); 5 (testimony of Aron Machora and Jacob Henriques Fereira); 6 (testimony of Debora and Abraham Keyser); 29 (testimony of Samuel d'Costa Andrade); 30 (testimony of Jeosuah Belmonte and Jacob Athias d'Neira).

116 NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie (NWIC), 1.05.01.02, inv. nr. 223: 15, 5–6; 29, 1–2; 30, 1–2.

117 NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie (NWIC), 1.05.01.02, inv. nr. 223: 7, 1–2; 14, 21.

contrast to what transpired in adultery cases in Suriname, only a few of the witnesses gave their testimony in Portuguese.<sup>118</sup> This does not mean that Portuguese was not used among Portuguese Jews on Curaçao. Most of the existing records of the case come from the Dutch colonial administration and not from the Portuguese community records, which almost certainly would have been in Portuguese. Therefore, it would be logical for the witnesses to give their testimony in Dutch instead of Portuguese if they were fluent in the language. But this still raises the question of the testimony given in Papiamentu. The Dutch authorities brought in an official interpreter to translate the documents to Dutch, a costly endeavor. Many or most of these officials must have known Papiamentu. There is ample evidence from the 1730s of occasional testimony given in “creoles taal” on the island, taken without a mandated Dutch translation.<sup>119</sup> Official translations presumably served the purpose of validating them for the civil court case. The prominent role that Papiamentu played in the unfolding events of the adultery case between Sarah and Abraham is of great interest to linguists specializing in creole languages and vividly substantiates Linda Rupert’s assertion of a widespread creolization of the island by the latter part of the eighteenth century.<sup>120</sup>

### A Case from Amsterdam: Adultery and Its Trans-Atlantic Dimensions

Sometime in the mid-eighteenth century, Selomoh Gomes Soares relocated to Suriname, like so many other Portuguese Jews had before him, leaving his wife Simha and three daughters behind.<sup>121</sup> He might have been one of the *despachados*, impoverished Jews dispatched from Amsterdam, usually to the Americas, by the local Portuguese Jewish regents in order to rid their community of individuals and families who drained the ever-diminishing charity chests. Suriname was the primary destination for these Jews. Robert Cohen’s

118 NL-HaNA, Ibid., 9 (testimony of Rabbi Jacob Lopes); 10 (testimony of Isaac Cardoso); 11 (testimony of Ribca Lopes Fonseca); 12 (testimony of Esther Levy); 13 (testimony of David Lopes Dias).

119 Rupert, *Contraband and Creolization*, 214.

120 Ibid., 215.

121 Three births were registered to Selomah Gomes Soares and Simha Salom: Ester, in 1763, Rachel, in 1764, and Jeudit, in 1766. SAA, 334, 345 (Geboorteregister – Birth registry), 108, 112, 120. We must assume that Rachel died at some point before or during the events which transpired, though we have found no record of her death. Only two children are mentioned as going to Suriname, and there are records of both Ester and Jeudit in

calculations show that 135 destitute Jews were sent to Suriname between 1759–1814, more than to any other single destination.<sup>122</sup>

In 1768, Simha Gomes Soares was publically accused of adultery by the *parnassim* of the Portuguese Jewish community in Amsterdam. Two anonymous witnesses came forward to identify David, the son of Daniel de León, as the father of the fetus. These same two witnesses further asserted that León had rented Simha a house in which she could remain concealed for the duration of her pregnancy. But his efforts were to no avail. Though the Portuguese Jewish community in Amsterdam was several times larger than that of Willemstad and the composition of the surrounding population was different, the social dynamics were similar. Gossip and the informal transfer of information were vital mechanisms through which to reinforce community norms.

On July 5, 1768, Simha and David were called before the *parnassim* because it had “come to their knowledge” via an unnamed tale-bearer that the wayward couple had committed a “great crime according to our law.”<sup>123</sup> Much like Abraham Andrade, Sarah Pardo, and Moses Fernandes in the Dutch colonies, David de León initially refused to appear in the synagogue to answer the charges against him. In fact, de León managed to avoid coming before the *parnassim* by absenting himself from the city. For over three weeks, no one knew where to find him. His father, when questioned, claimed ignorance of his whereabouts. The regents then initiated a search of the city to locate him. It is not clear if their search was successful, or whether de León finally decided to come forward of his own volition.

When he did come forward, the two lovers were both briefly excommunicated with the usual punishments that accompanied such a sentence, including not being allowed to communicate with anyone outside of their immediate families. However, de León, just like Abraham Andrade and Moses Fernandes after him, was expected to participate in a very public and highly ritualized act in order to be reconciled with the community. He was required to climb the stairs on the left side of the pulpit within the synagogue, declare his sins, and

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Suriname. Ester Gomes Soares sent a letter from Amsterdam to the Portuguese Jewish Mahamad in Suriname in 1820 addressed to the administrators of orphans. NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 10, January 16, 1820. Jeudith de Sel. Gomes Soares was buried in Jodensavanne. NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 422, p.2, number 8.

122 Robert Cohen, *Jews in Another Environment: Surinam in the second half of the eighteenth century* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 25.

123 SAA, 334, 22 (“Compendio de escamoth” – Regulations, 1728–1814), 265–267 (*grande crimem conforme nossa ley*). All discussion of this case is based on this file, unless otherwise cited.

ask for forgiveness for the scandal that he had caused. This mantra was to be repeated three times in total. During the month of Elul, he was ordered to refrain from shaving, sit in a proscribed space in the synagogue, and visit the synagogue twice a week. Public acts of penance put penitents such as David de León before the community as a warning to others, while also providing a process by which the offender might be restored fully to the community. In addition, the public staging of penance was a way to regulate social behavior. Simha, however, due to her “great contrition for her crimes and submission to authority,” had no penance to make whatsoever. Apparently, her confession to the *parnassim* and her evident remorse were enough to satisfy them.<sup>124</sup>

This case – alongside the affairs we have described from the colonies – could indicate that while it was important for the man to perform a ritual of penance publically, women were not expected to carry out such a public act in the sacred space of the synagogue. Whether this indicates a lower or higher social or religious status for women is unclear, but certainly contrasts to general practice in early modern Christian society, where women were part of the culture of public penitence. In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Germany, for instance, women accused of adultery were often forced to wear distinctive clothing and undergo public penance in the church.<sup>125</sup> Likewise, ecclesiastical authorities in early modern England and British America often sentenced women to public displays of contrition, which could involve standing at the local meetinghouse wearing white sheets and holding white wands, a traditional form of public penance for having sex outside marriage.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>124</sup> SAA 334, 22, 267.

<sup>125</sup> Joel F. Harrington, *The Unwanted Child: The Fate of Foundlings, Orphans, and Juvenile Criminals in Early Modern Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 44. Likewise, ecclesiastical authorities in early modern England often sentenced women to public displays of contrition. Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, 101, 240, 247, 272, 298, 379. See also, Jim Sharpe, “Women, Witchcraft, and the Legal Process,” in *Women, Crime And The Courts In Early Modern England*, ed. J.I. Kermode and Garthine Walker (Routledge: London, 1994), 106–124, 119. Cynthia Lynn Lyerly, “Southern Colonial Protestant Women” in *Encyclopedia of women and religion in North America*, ed. Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Radford Ruether, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 236–241, 238.

<sup>126</sup> Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, 101, 240, 247, 272, 298, 379; Jim Sharpe, “Women, Witchcraft, and the Legal Process,” 119; Cynthia Lynn Lyerly, “Southern Colonial Protestant Women,” 238.

Simha had no money with which to pay a fine, which could have factored into the sentencing.<sup>127</sup> However, de León was not fined either, an interesting contrast to the practice in Suriname and Curaçao, where fines seem to have been the norm. It may seem that Simha initially escaped the worst of the consequences for her “great crime against the law.” But in March of 1770, almost two years after the affair became a public matter, Selomoh Gomes Soares learned of his wife’s treacherous behavior via a letter from his cousin Joseph Gomes Silva of Amsterdam, who advised his cousin to divorce.<sup>128</sup> A few months later, a Mr. de Vries arrived in Amsterdam on a ship from Suriname with a letter for the *parnassim* of the Portuguese Jewish community from Selomoh Gomes Soares. In this letter, Soares requested that they provide every possible assistance in speedily transporting his daughters to him in Suriname so that they could be under his “paternal protection,” a possible allusion to the moral unsuitability of his wife as a caretaker for their children.<sup>129</sup> Soares was apparently in less of a hurry to legalize the end of his marriage, for in October of 1770, the Haham of Amsterdam wrote to his counterpart in Jodensavanne, asking Soares to provide a Jewish divorce decree (*guet*).<sup>130</sup> There is no evidence that Soares did so; perhaps his intention was to keep his wife in a state of legal suspension as an *agunah*, an “anchored” wife who, according to rabbinical law, was forbidden to remarry.

Soares’ fortunes seem to have been on the rise by then, meaning that he could finally afford to have his children transported to him. In 1772, Soares received a piece of land valued at 200 Dutch guilders from Jacob de Abraham de Meza.<sup>131</sup> In 1774, some three or four years after his daughters would have arrived in Suriname, Soares sold to Samuel Cohen Nassy a house and plot of land in the province of the savannah between the land of Samuel Henriquez Fereyra and the said Nassy, for 1500 Dutch guilders.<sup>132</sup> If Soares’ luck was

127 She was already living quite precariously on the edges of poverty. SAA, 334, 27 (“Compendio de escamoth” – Regulations, 1767–1773), 127.

128 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, March 20, 1770. There is no record of any letter to Soares informing him of his wife’s excommunication in the relatively complete books of letters sent by the Amsterdam community (*uitgaande brieven*), so it seems likely that he was notified of the scandal solely via his cousin’s letter. SAA, 334, 1028BB (Documents concerning the Jewish communities in Amsterdam, Curaçao, Suriname, and Constantinople, 1750–1793); 95 (“copiador de cartas” – copies of outgoing letters, 1773–1784).

129 SAA, 334, 94 (“copiador de cartas” – copies of outgoing letters, 1764–1773), June 12, 1770, 332.

130 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 1, October 19, 1770.

131 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 135, 67.

132 NL-HaNA, Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente Suriname, 1.05.11.18, inv. nr. 135, p. 68–69.



looking up, the same could not be said for his wife. When the *parnassim* arrived on her doorstep with her husband's letter in hand, she was living on communal assistance and could not afford to feed the children.<sup>133</sup> Her poverty left her in an extremely vulnerable position. Although she initially refused to relinquish her daughters to their father in Suriname, the *parnassim* visited several times over the coming weeks using "persuasive and suave" arguments<sup>134</sup> – actually, threats, one of which included cutting off all community charity should she refuse. Simha was completely dependent upon the charity chest, as was her mother, who was mentally ill, her two surviving daughters, and any child that may have been born of her adulterous affair with León.<sup>135</sup> In the end, Simha acceded to the demands and her daughters were dispatched to their father in Suriname.<sup>136</sup>

The scandal of his wife's adulterous behavior never seems to have affected Soares' reputation or career in Suriname. In 1777, Selomoh Gomes Soares and David de Isaac Cohen Nassy formed a partnership and opened a pharmaceutical store to serve the infirm in the savannah, whether white or black, under the name Soares & Company.<sup>137</sup> While Gomes Soares' career and reputation did not seem to have suffered, his wife did. His financial abandonment of her left her entirely at the mercy of the *parnassim* who controlled access to communal charitable funds. This, in turn, left her little recourse when these communal authorities demanded that her children be turned over to their father. This highlights the male-dominated system of the Portuguese Jewish communities on both sides of the Atlantic, which privileged a father's authority above a mother's, and left women (especially those deemed morally unfit) with very little room in which to maneuver in asserting their rights to their children. This same community routinely sent children to live with their father or his family in case of divorce, and considered

133 SAA, 334, 27 ("Compendio de escamoth" – Regulations, 1767–1773), 127.

134 SAA, 334, 27 ("Compendio de escamoth" – Regulations, 1767–1773), 127, 145 ("Argumentos suaves e persuasivos").

135 On the mental illness of Simha's mother, see, SAA, 334, 61 ("Livro de segredos" – Confidential book), 31. Bastard children were registered in the community records, though usually with the notation *mamzerta* next to their names. We could find no record of any child born to Simha Salom or David de León in the birth registers, whether with the notation *mamzerta* or not. For an example, see SAA, 345 (Geboorteregister – Birth registry), 118. The child could have died at birth or, for some other reason, not been registered.

136 SAA, 334, 94 ("copiador de cartas" – copies of outgoing letters, 1764–1773), 332.

137 NL-HaNA, SONA, L.05.11.14, inv. nr. 788, February 23, 1780; and December 3, 1777.

illegitimate daughters of Portuguese fathers and Christian mothers eligible for the *Dotar* dowry.<sup>138</sup>

The Salom/Soares case also shows, in sharp contrast to the colonies, the power communal authorities exercised over members of the Portuguese Jewish community in Amsterdam, especially poor to middling ones. In another quite visible contrast to the cases in Suriname and Curaçao, both de León and Salom admitted their “enormous crimes.” They did not appeal to civil authorities for their sentences to be overturned, and despite León’s initial attempts to avoid coming before the *parnassim*, he ultimately submitted to his punishment without further protest. This acceptance of the punishment as meted out by the *parnassim* raises interesting questions. We tentatively suggest that Salom and de León acquiesced in part because they did not have the financial wherewithal and connections to appeal beyond the Portuguese Jewish community. Another possibility is that the social distance between Jewish and Christian civil authorities in Amsterdam was much greater than in the colonies.

Finally, the affair of Simha Salom and David de León should be contextualized within the trend towards increasing mobility which characterized the early modern period and led to growing numbers of women and children being left behind, either temporarily or permanently.<sup>139</sup> Herman Roodenburg shows that 24 percent of all infidelity cases brought to the attention of the Amsterdam Dutch Reformed consistory between 1578 and 1700 involved a wife whose husband was away in the East or West Indies. Of the women accused of infidelity during the period under study, 83 of their husbands had gone to the East Indies and four to the West Indies or Brazil.<sup>140</sup> As the Salom/de

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138 The Portuguese Mahamad was very unlikely to have taken the children from a poor father and sent them to a rich mother. The Portuguese community in Amsterdam adhered very strongly and very clearly to Iberian socio-sexual norms, including the primacy of paternal authority. To our knowledge, there are no cases of a daughter of a Christian father and a Portuguese mother applying for the *dotar*. This could either be because such a situation had never happened due to limitations on women’s freedom and ability to come into contact with a Christian man or, more likely, if such a situation had come about, the Jewish woman would have been expelled from the community if she was acknowledged to be pregnant by a Christian man. The very idea of a child of a Christian father applying for the *dotar* wasn’t even considered likely enough to be addressed in the regulations, whereas there are several well-documented cases of the daughters of Portuguese Jewish men with Christian women applying for and receiving a dowry.

139 Leslie P. Moch, *Moving Europeans: Migration in Western Europe since 1650* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 84–87; and Jan Lucassen, *Dutch Long Distance Migration: A concise History 1600–1900* (Amsterdam: IISG Research Paper 3, 1991), 20, 36.

140 Roodenburg, *Onder Censuur*, 283.

León case shows, Jewish communities were not immune to this trend. In fact, some scholars speculate that it may have been more common within Jewish communities than in non-Jewish ones, due to the allegedly higher mobility of Jews during the early modern period.<sup>141</sup>

### Conclusion: The Dutch Atlantic through the Prism of Adultery

The foregoing cases of real or alleged marital infidelity in Suriname, Curaçao, and Amsterdam have raised a number of issues at the heart of contemporary Atlantic historiography. The interest in preserving the wealth and prestige of leading colonial families – and the ability to do so – may explain why so many Jewish family and community members, on the one hand, and government officials on the other, colluded in pretending the deed never happened. Perhaps the most interesting finding of this study has been the mechanisms that created the “language of silence.”<sup>142</sup> Ultimately, no adultery was officially found in the Fernandes/Bueno de Mesquita and Andrade/Pardo cases. Clearly at play was an effort to uphold the economic and social standing of affluent white families in colonies whose majority populations were both enslaved and of African origin. The detailed documentation of these two litigations challenges the assumption of scholars like Nell Irvin Painter who has argued that only the impoverished lived “in full view of the world.”<sup>143</sup> By contrast, Sarah Pardo and Abraham Andrade of Curaçao, and Moses Fernandes and Deborah Bueno de Mesquita in Suriname, unambiguously divulge the complex and drawn-out process by which public secrets were created within the privileged classes. Only on an official level did adultery among these wealthy men and women “never happen.” On the ground, it most surely did happen – and everyone knew it.

Also foregrounded in both Suriname and even more so in Curaçao is the key role enslaved and free people of color played in the transmission of rumors, and how entangled these populations were with elite white Jews, who sometimes treated their social inferiors as confidantes and family advisers. The

141 See Florike Egmond, “Contours of Identity: Poor Ashkenazim in the Dutch Republic,” in *Dutch Jewish History, Volume III: Proceedings of the Fifth Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands*, ed. J. Michman, 205–225, 217–218.

142 Carlos Herrera, “Infidelity and the Presidio Captain: Adultery and Honor in the Lives of María Rosa Tato y Anza and José Antonio Vildósola, Sonora, New Spain, 1769–1783,” 214.

143 Nell Irvin Painter, *Southern History Across the Color Line: Essays* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 36.

Curaçao case, too, illustrates the social backdrop against which Papiamentu was developed as a language of intra-communal use. Suriname's infamous adultery accusation, blurted out by the hapless but resourceful Moses Rodrigues del Prado, highlights racialized double standards and the acumen of Eurafrican Jews in building up negotiating power in a white-dominant society.

The emergence of Eurafrican Jews in Suriname and the triple-layered legal system functioning both there and in Curaçao are particular to the inner dynamics of Portuguese Jewish communities and their interactions with local Dutch authorities. The racial features of Suriname's Portuguese Jewish community and the legal systems both there and in Curaçao are informed by the distinctiveness of Portuguese Jewish culture and the special position of the population vis-à-vis the "host society." Jews were the only non-Christian white group in the Dutch Atlantic and comprised from one-third to one-half of the white populations. At the same time, Portuguese Jews enjoyed a high degree of autonomy and an array of privileges that allowed them to maintain and develop their historic "culture" – a concept that encompasses everything from language, religion, and jurisprudence to collective historical consciousness. Adultery as played out among these communities is therefore always heard in a Jewish key, with specific references to the laws and customs that governed sexual behavior and punishment, invariably adjusted to environments centrally informed by slavery.

That several of the parties involved in the Amsterdam adultery suit were dispatched, either voluntarily or otherwise, to and from the Caribbean and Amsterdam, bespeaks of an intense Atlantic mobility that – while it did not create the problem of marital infidelity – both exacerbated it and provided a long-distance escape hatch for those fleeing public disgrace. The asymmetrical status change experienced by adulterous parties seems to have been partly a function of gender, but perhaps more so a factor of the kind of wealth that is often paired with political power.

Most of what we have brought to light in this chapter is probably generalizable to broader society. As such, our findings serve as a lens through which to explore the creation of public secrets, the entanglement of enslaved and free populations in the American colonies, and the genesis there of ethnic groups and languages. But let us conclude that the incidence of adultery was not only here and there – it was everywhere. The pervasiveness of marital infidelity – however culturally defined and treated – means that it can be used as a perceptive tool for examining issues of central concern in a variety of societies outside the Atlantic world.

# The Scholarly Atlantic

## *Circuits of Knowledge between Britain, the Dutch Republic and the Americas in the Eighteenth Century*

Karel Davids

On 30 August 1735, Johan Frederik Gronovius in Leiden wrote to his friend and fellow-naturalist Richard Richardson in Bierley, England, “You will remember that at the time you arrived here in town, you met at Mr. Lawson’s a gentleman from Sweden, that went the same night to Amsterdam, where he is printing his *Bibliothecam Botanicam*. His name is Carolus Linnaeus.” Gronovius went on to praise Linnaeus’ singular learning “in all parts of natural history” and the excellent qualities of his new taxonomy of minerals, plants and animals. Gronovius predicted that “all the world” would especially be “much pleased” with his “Botanic Table,” although he expected that it would take time “before one can know the right use,” and it might thus “be rejected” by those who would not be prepared to devote some time to study it.<sup>1</sup> Gronovius himself was so impressed by the significance of Linnaeus’ achievement that he not only helped to see several of works of Linnaeus through the press in the Netherlands but also decided to reorder a survey of the “plants, fruits, and trees native to Virginia” sent to him in manuscript by John Clayton of Virginia shortly before, according to Linnaeus’ system of classification, and publish it as the *Flora Virginica* in 1739/1743. This was the first comprehensive overview of the flora in this British American colony to appear anywhere.<sup>2</sup>

The story of Gronovius, Linnaeus and the *Flora Virginica* illustrates the main theme of this essay, namely the increasing connectedness between circuits of knowledge in the North Atlantic in the eighteenth century and the prominent role of actors in the Dutch Republic in the emergence and evolution of these networks. I conceive of “knowledge” both in the meaning of

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1 Johan Frederik Gronovius to Richard Richardson, 30 August 1735, in *Extracts from the literary and scientific correspondence of Richard Richardson, M.D., F.R.S.* (Yarmouth: Charles Sloman, 1835), 343–345.

2 *Flora Virginica exhibens plantas quas V.C. Johannes Clayton in Virginia observavit et collegit, easdem methodo sexuali disposuit, ad genera propria retulit, nominibus specificis insignivit et minus cognitatis descripsit Joh. Fred. Gronovius*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Cornelis Waak, 1739–1743); Raymond Phineas Stearns, *Science in the British colonies of America* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1970) 556–557; Joan K. Stemmler, “A brief note on the authorship of the first *Flora Virginica*: Clayton, Gronovius and Linnaeus,” *Virginia Journal of Science* 55 (2004): 125–134.

*kennen*, knowledge by acquaintance of objects, namely from the senses by taste and experience, and in the meaning of *weten*, knowledge of causal explanation by reasoning.<sup>3</sup> Scholarship can comprise both forms of knowledge.

Contrary to views in the Anglo-American literature,<sup>4</sup> I will show that the evolution of knowledge networks in the North Atlantic in the eighteenth century was a more complex affair than just the bilateral exchange between British and the American colonials. It was more than an interaction between confident, established scholars in the imperial metropolis and restless outsiders from New York, Philadelphia or Charleston trying to make a name for themselves in the wider world. European continentals, for a start, were deeply involved in networking. Moreover, players on both sides of the Atlantic not only entertained bilateral relations, but often corresponded with people in more than one region at the same time. Multilateral relationships, as in the case of Gronovius, were by no means uncommon. And these sorts of relationships developed not just between actors based in Britain, the Continent and the British American colonies, but also between American colonials or European continentals and people living in South America, notably in Dutch Guiana. In the course of the eighteenth century, networks of knowledge cut across different imperial spaces. This essay concentrates on connections between Britain, the Dutch Republic and the Americas, with occasional glances at Sweden, France and Italy. It does not deal with the networks of knowledge in the North Atlantic as a whole, including the contributions of Spain or Denmark. Such a comparative, overarching analysis is the subject of other studies.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from increased connectedness between circuits of knowledge in a *geographical* sense, I will argue that the North Atlantic in the eighteenth century also saw a growth in connections in other respects. Circuits of knowledge

3 For this distinction, see Harold Cook, *Matters of exchange. Commerce, medicine, and science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 15, 20.

4 See e.g. Stearns, *Science in the British colonies*; John C. Greene, *American science in the Age of Jefferson* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1984); Joyce E. Chaplin, *The first scientific American. Benjamin Franklin and the pursuit of genius* (New York: Basic Books, 2006); Nick Wrightson, "[Those with] great abilities have not always the best information.' How Franklin's transatlantic book-trade and scientific networks interacted, ca. 1730–1757," *Early American Studies* 8 (2010): 94–119.

5 See Karel Davids, "Dutch and Spanish global networks of knowledge in the Early Modern Period: Structures, connections, changes," in *Centres and cycles of accumulation in and around the Netherlands during the Early Modern Period*, ed. Lissa Roberts (Berlin-Münster: LIT Verlag, 2011), 29–52; and my forthcoming book *Ocean of knowledge: Globalization and the making of knowledge in the Atlantic world, c. 1680–1850*.

became more multipurpose, and were increasingly used for transmission of knowledge on different subjects, e.g. on natural history as well as on electricity or the behavior of water, winds and ocean currents. Moreover, crossborder exchange in a *social* sense occurred slightly more often than before.<sup>6</sup> Connections increased between two sorts of circuits. In the first of these circuits, knowledge was usually recorded in printed verbal statements or visual representations of regularities, principles or general patterns. In this circuit, carriers of knowledge often came from the ranks of academics or members of learned societies, who communicated through written correspondence and journals of a scholarly or general nature. In the second circuit, knowledge often had a localized, site-specific nature and normally was memorized and transmitted orally rather than in written or printed form. Learning by watching, hearing and feeling was more common than learning by reading or writing. In this circuit, carriers of knowledge were often craftsmen, seamen, fishermen, peasants, hunters or common laborers, including slaves. In the eighteenth century, scholars (from circuit one) were often not only more interested in communicating with peers, but also showed themselves willing to learn from people outside the scholarly world, such as seamen or Native Americans (from circuit two).

Dutch actors have played a central role in the emergence and evolution of scholarly networks of knowledge. Although the continued existence of a (modest) colonial empire in the Atlantic was in this context not an entirely irrelevant factor, I will argue that colonial possessions were not a *sine qua non* for the role of Dutch actors in flows of knowledge. Cross-Atlantic networks of knowledge emerged and evolved in part independently from the existence of colonial empires.

How, then, did these scholarly networks of knowledge between Britain, the Dutch Republic and the Americas develop? What factors made their development possible and how can the key role of Dutch actors be explained?

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6 However, this essay does not aim to engage with the voluminous body of literature on “local,” “indigenous” or “subaltern” knowledge. See for example Walter D. Mignolo, *Local histories/Global designs. Coloniality, subaltern knowledges and border thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Hugh Raffles, *In Amazonia. A natural history* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Antonio Barrera-Osorio, “Local herbs, global medicines: commerce, knowledge and commodities in Spanish America,” in *Merchants and marvels. Commerce, science and art in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Pamela H. Smith and Paula Findlen (New York: Routledge, 2002), 163–181; Londa Schiebinger, *Plants and empire. Colonial bioprospecting in the Atlantic world* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Stephen Snelders, *Vrijbuiters in de heilkunde, op zoek naar medische kennis in de tropen* (Amsterdam: Atlas, 2012).

These are the central questions of this essay. The first section will discuss the emergence of connected circuits of knowledge up to the 1740s, the second section looks at flows of knowledge in these circuits between the 1740s and the 1790s and the third examines the facilities and forces that made these developments possible. The conclusion summarizes and discusses the findings of this article.

### Emerging Transatlantic Networks up to circa 1740

The existing literature on transatlantic networks of knowledge in the early eighteenth century North Atlantic concentrates on the fledgling contacts between scattered groups of aspirant scientists in British colonies in America and established scholars in Britain, who were formally organized in the Royal Society of London. Raymond Phineas Stearns has described in detail how scientists in the American colonies gradually entered into regular contact with each other and with leading scientists in the metropolis and eventually managed to make contributions that were acknowledged as original and important by their overseas “mentors.” While “colonial men of science” at first mainly served as “field workers” for scholars on the other side of the Atlantic, especially in the Royal Society of London, by 1770 they were able to “generate their own sources of inspiration, criticism and leadership,” Stearns has argued. The formation of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia in the winter of 1768–1769, modeled after the society in London, marked in his view the “crowning point” of this emancipation.<sup>7</sup>

Other historians have studied this development from the perspective of individual scientists or through the lens of particular fields of inquiry. Joyce Chaplin and Nick Wrightson have analyzed the career and connections of “the first scientific American,” Benjamin Franklin. In a similar vein, Brooke Hindle has written a biography of the man who in the next generation succeeded Franklin as an icon of American scientific achievement, David Rittenhouse.<sup>8</sup> James Delbourgo and Susan Scott Parrish have examined why people in the British American colonies in the eighteenth century came to be curious about

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7 Stearns, *Science in the British colonies*, esp. xiii–xiv and 670.

8 Chaplin, *Benjamin Franklin*, Wrightson, “[Those with] great abilities;” Brooke Hindle, *David Rittenhouse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964). The Mapping the Republic of Letters project at Stanford University has visualized Franklin’s correspondence network from various angles, see <http://republicofletters.stanford.edu/case-study/visualizing-benjamin-franklins-correspondence-network/>.



subjects such as electricity or natural history and how they acquired their knowledge.<sup>9</sup>

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the standard argument runs, an “intercontinental network of scientific communication” had arisen, which was “both continental [meaning: American, KD) and intercontinental in scope.” “No longer were colonial scientists isolated from one another in a wilderness,” Stearns has written. The network of learned correspondents had become much more extended and integrated than a few decades before. The growth of this transatlantic “community” can, according to these historians, be explained on the one hand by factors on the British side such as “the stimulating promotional activities of the Royal Society of London” and in particular the tireless coordinating efforts of Peter Collinson, and on the other hand, by factors on the American side such as the “widening public interest of the colonists themselves,” “the societal growth of colonial institutions” and more specifically, the patient, methodical network-building by Benjamin Franklin.<sup>10</sup>

This conventional picture is not inaccurate, I would argue, but it is incomplete. Learned men from Continental Europe and other regions outside the British Atlantic world make an occasional appearance in these studies, but they are essentially relegated to the margins. The “Atlantic” or “transnational” dimension barely seems to extend beyond the borders of the Anglo-American world and the networks of knowledge are centered on Britain. The reality in the eighteenth century was different. The scholarly Atlantic was much larger than the colonial empire of Britain and it was a polycentric rather than a monocentric entity.

A cursory glance at the numerous volumes of edited correspondence of scholars on both sides of the Atlantic in the eighteenth century shows that exchange of knowledge went beyond the restrictions of the British mercantilist system. London was not in a privileged position as a destination for exports of knowledge from the American colonies. The genesis of the *Flora Virginica* is a telling case in point. John Clayton sent his items and descriptions not just to England, but also to a naturalist in the Dutch Republic, Johan Frederik Gronovius. It was Gronovius, not a British naturalist, who got Clayton's

9 James Delbourgo, *A most amazing scene of wonders: Electricity and Enlightenment in Early America* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006); Susan Scott Parish, *American curiosity: Cultures of natural history in the Colonial British American world* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

10 Stearns, *Science in the British colonies*, 534–535, Chaplin, *Benjamin Franklin*, 94–95; Wrightson, “[Those with] great abilities,” 108, 113–114; Delbourgo, *A most amazing scene of wonders*, 17–22.

manuscript published. And even after Clayton had sent a complete manuscript for a new edition of the *Flora* to one of the leading botanists in Britain in 1757, Peter Collinson, it was not in London but in Leiden that the second edition of the book appeared. Collinson himself had for many years urged Gronovius Sr. to bring out a new edition of this “work so much wanted and so much desired.”<sup>11</sup>

Networks of knowledge between the British American colonies and the European Continent came into being well before the middle of the 1730s. Linnaeus’ arrival on the scene gave this development a powerful boost,<sup>12</sup> but it did not create it. The emergence of these cross-Atlantic networks shows that colonial possessions were not a *sine qua non* for the role of Dutch actors in flows of knowledge. Cross-Atlantic networks of knowledge arose and evolved in part independently from the existence of colonial empires. The networking probably started soon after Herman Boerhaave in 1709 had succeeded Pieter Hotton as professor of botany and curator of the botanical garden at the University of Leiden. In 1722 Boerhaave got involved in a “crowd funding” scheme to support an expedition by botanist Thomas More to all colonies north of Virginia to collect “plants, seeds, fruits, barks, metall...and all such other naturall bodies frequenting those countrys as ye unknown to us”. The participants of this fund, organized by William Sherard, paid an annual contribution of one pound or one guinea. Apart from Boerhaave, all members came from Britain.<sup>13</sup> Johan Frederik Gronovius entered into correspondence with another seasoned botanical traveler in the Americas, Mark Catesby, sometime before 1736. After collecting a vast amount of specimens in the Southern mainland colonies and the Bahamas in the 1720s, Catesby had returned to London

11 Peter Collinson to Johan Frederik Gronovius, 17 September 1756, in *Forget not mee and my garden. . . Selected letters, 1725–1768, of Peter Collinson F.R.S.*, ed. Alan W. Armstrong (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2002) 201–202; see also Collinson to Gronovius, 23 March 1753, in idem, 166–168 and Collinson to Gronovius, 14 October 1755, in idem, 191–192. In contrast to Whitfield Bell, *Patriot-improvers*, 170–171. I think it unlikely that Laurens Theodoor Gronovius was unaware of the existence of Clayton’s manuscript in England; after all, Collinson had written his father about it in September 1758 and Clayton’s son, Thomas, had visited Holland in late 1758 or early 1759; see Collinson to Gronovius, 10 September 1758, and Collinson to Gronovius, 26 December 1758, in idem: Armstrong, ed., *Forget not mee*, 213–215.

12 Thanks to Linnaeus’ voluminous correspondence, this networking is also clearly visible for the eye of the present-day historian. Letters to and from Linnaeus are now being made available in an electronic edition initiated by the Swedish Linnaeus Society and published by the Centre international d’étude du XVIIIe siècle; Ferney-Voltaire, *The Linnaean Correspondence*, <http://linnaeus.c18.net>.

13 Stearns, *Science in the British colonies*, 474.

in 1726. Gronovius kept corresponding with him until his death in 1749.<sup>14</sup> Another early American correspondent of Gronovius was Lewis Johnston in New York.<sup>15</sup>

Scholars in the Dutch Republic depended for the supply of items from the natural world in the Americas not solely on correspondents in the British American colonies or on mediators in Britain, such as Sherard, Collinson or Catesby. The period before the 1730s also saw the rise of a network between scholars in the Netherlands and “field workers” in Dutch colonies in the Americas, who supplied collectors in Britain as well as the Dutch Republic. In a letter from 1706 to Sir Hans Sloane, physician and Secretary of the Royal Society in London, Frederik Ruysch, professor of anatomy at the Athenaeum Illustre in Amsterdam, promised to send a specimen of a particular kind of toad from America, which Sloane had asked for.<sup>16</sup> Ruysch must have had a contact in America based outside the British empire. Suriname definitely was a source of natural curiosities in the early eighteenth century. Butterflies and other insects from Suriname were offered to Sloane and James Petiver in London via Dutch collectors based in Haarlem and Rotterdam.<sup>17</sup> An anonymous collector “ex Surinama” – identified as Isaac Augar, doctor of the hospital in Paramaribo – sent specimens of the local flora to Gronovius in 1736.<sup>18</sup> Augar’s successor at the hospital, Johann Bartsch, was hand-picked by Linnaeus himself to as an expert local correspondent for botanists in the metropolis. Despite Bartsch’s untimely death, correspondence about natural history between the Dutch Republic and Dutch Guiana did not completely cease, as we will see shortly.

By the late 1740s, networks of knowledge between correspondents in the Dutch Republic and in the British American colonies were, judging by the

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- 14 Gronovius to Carolus Linnaeus, 15 June 1736, *The Linnaean Correspondence*, linnaeus.c18.net, letter Loo89 (consulted 26 July 2012); Gronovius to John Bartram, 2 July 1750, in *Memorials of John Bartram and Humphry Marshall, with notices of their botanical contemporaries*, ed. William Darlington (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1849), 358.
  - 15 Lewis Johnston to Johan Frederik Gronovius, 20 November 1734, Koninklijke Bibliotheek The Hague [Dutch National Library] Ms. 121 D 6 no. 37.
  - 16 Frederik Ruysch to Hans Sloane, 26 August 1706, *Sir Hans Sloane’s Correspondence Online*, <https://drc.usask.ca/projects/sloaneletters/doku.php?id=letter&letterid=1270> (consulted 1 March 2013).
  - 17 Daniel à Loenen to Hans Sloane, 30 July 1713, *Sir Hans Sloane’s Correspondence Online*, <https://drc.usask.ca/projects/sloaneletters/doku.php?id=letter&letterid=1870> (consulted 1 March 2013); Eric Jorink, *Het Boeck der Natuere. Nederlandse geleerden en de wonderen van Gods schepping 1571–1715* (Leiden: Primavera Press, 2006), 258.
  - 18 D. Onno Wijnands and Johannes Heniger, “The origins of Clifford’s herbarium,” *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society* 106 (1991): 129–146, 142.

frequency of contacts, almost as highly developed as those between American colonists and learned men in England. Some of the key American correspondents of Peter Collinson entered into direct contact with his friend in Holland, Johan Frederik Gronovius. This relationship was evidently beneficial for both sides. James Clayton in Virginia, John Bartram in Pennsylvania and Cadwallader Colden in New York sent Gronovius samples of plants, animals or minerals, told him about interesting visitors to their locale and occasionally ventured some new ideas of their own. Gronovius sent his American correspondents copies of books published in the Netherlands, kept them informed about recent or upcoming publications on natural history, commented on their findings and sometimes also asked for specific sorts of items.

Each of these correspondents could also serve as a link to other members of the Republic of Letters. Gronovius served for the Americans as a contact with European scholars such as Carolus Linnaeus, Petrus van Musschenbroek and Johannes Lulofs.<sup>19</sup> Bartram acted for Gronovius as a go-between in America with their mutual friends, naturalists Phineas Bond and James Logan.<sup>20</sup> Alexander Garden from Charleston, Carolina, was able to read letters from Collinson and Gronovius to Cadwallader Colden when visiting Colden in Coldenham, New York, in 1754.<sup>21</sup> Colden and Bartram acted as intermediaries between Gronovius and Benjamin Franklin.<sup>22</sup> It was Colden who sent Gronovius a copy of Franklin's description of his newly-invented fireplace, and it was Bartram who in 1746 received from Gronovius two copies of the Dutch translation of this tract, which, according to the Leiden physician, "hath found a great applause in this part of the

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- 19 Gronovius to Cadwallader Colden, 6 August 1743, in *Selections from the scientific correspondence of Cadwallader Colden with Gronovius, Linnaeus, Collinson and other naturalists*, ed. Asa Gray (New Haven: B.L. Hamlen, 1843), 4–7, esp. 6; Colden to Gronovius (n.d., probably 1744), in idem, 9–16, esp. 9; Colden to Gronovius, 1 October 1755, in idem, 20–23, esp. 22; Gronovius to Bartram, 25 July 1744, in Darlington, ed., *Memorials*, 349–351, esp. 350.
  - 20 Bartram to Gronovius, 30 November 1743, in Darlington, ed., *Memorials*, 349; Bartram to Gronovius, 6 December 1745, in idem, 352–353.
  - 21 Stearns, *Science in the British colonies*, 601.
  - 22 Benjamin Franklin to Cadwallader Colden, February 1746, in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 3:67; Franklin to Colden, 16 October 1746, in idem, 89; Gronovius sent his regards to Franklin via Bartram in 1754, see Gronovius to Bartram, 10 June 1754, in Darlington, ed., *Memorials*, 360–363, esp. 363; Franklin asked Gronovius via Bartram for copies of the Dutch translations of his tracts on the fireplace and on electricity, see Bartram to Gronovius, 30 November 1752, in idem, 359–360, esp. 360.

world.”<sup>23</sup> This translation, made on the initiative of Gronovius himself, was in fact “Franklin’s first overseas publication.”<sup>24</sup>

### Flowing Knowledge, 1740s–1790s

The story of the translation of Franklin’s tract is also interesting in other respects. It illustrates how transatlantic circuits of knowledge which originally centered around exchange of information on natural history could serve as conduits for information about other subjects and it demonstrates that the interimperial exchange of knowledge after 1740 became *more*, not *less* common than before. From the 1740s onwards, flows of knowledge running between Britain, the British American colonies, the Dutch Republic and Dutch Guiana became wider and more varied. The frequency of interchange of *knowledge* between actors in these different parts of the North Atlantic increased, even though the importance of Anglo-Dutch *trade* for British American colonists diminished after the 1730s.<sup>25</sup> The relative decline of the Netherlands as a center for the production of maps in the second quarter of the eighteenth century was not paralleled by a decreasing significance as a hub in transatlantic scholarly networks.<sup>26</sup> The increased scholarly interaction across the Atlantic after 1740 can be observed in the circulation of knowledge on electricity and fish and on the behavior of water, winds and ocean currents.

### *Electricity and Fish*

Although electrical phenomena had been known and observed for a long time, sustained research on electricity accelerated from the 1740s onwards. It is the first field of study where American colonials made a distinct, generally

23 Colden to Gronovius (n.d., probably 1744), in Gray, ed., *Selections*, 9–18, esp. 15; Gronovius to Bartram, 2 June 1746, in Darlington, ed., *Memorials*, 354–357, esp. 355.

24 Chaplin, *Benjamin Franklin*, 96; on Gronovius’ role, see his letter cited in the previous note. The English version of *An account of the new invented Pennsylvania fire-place* (Philadelphia: Franklin, 1744) can be found in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree et al., vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960). I have not yet traced a copy of Dutch translation. Apparently, even Franklin’s own library did not hold a copy; see Edwin Wolf and Kevin J. Hayes, eds., *The library of Benjamin Franklin* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2006).

25 See the contribution by Christian Koot in this volume.

26 Cf. Benjamin Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism. Geography, Globalism, and Europe’s Early Modern World*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

acclaimed contribution to science. The meteoric rise of Benjamin Franklin as a celebrated natural philosopher was first and foremost due to his experiments and observations on electricity, which earned him the award of the Copley Medal of the Royal Society in 1753 (the first colonial to receive this honor) and election as Fellow of the Society three years later.<sup>27</sup> But the event that sped up the process of inquiry into electrical phenomena was a discovery made independently by a researcher in Germany, Ewald von Kleist, and a group of experimental philosophers at the university of Leiden in the Dutch Republic. It has become known as the invention of the *Kleitsche Flasche* or, more commonly, the “Leyden jar.”

The “Leyden jar” consisted of a glass bottle coated with metal foil, which was partially filled with water and was provided with a metal wire passing through a stopper in its neck. The name “Leyden” derives from a description of experiments with this peculiar bottle in letters written by Petrus van Musschenbroek, professor of experimental physics in Leiden, to the secretary of the Académie des Sciences in Paris, René-Antoine de Réaumur, and to the leading French electrician Jean Nollet in January 1746, which soon circulated widely in the scholarly community in Europe. Shortly before, Van Musschenbroek, his colleague Jean Nicolas Sébastien Allamand and a visitor, Peter Cunaeus, had performed a series of trials with this device, which, unexpectedly, had generated a powerful, even terrifying, electrical discharge.<sup>28</sup> The “Leyden jar” for the first time made it possible to store static electricity. Thanks to the easy accessibility of stored electrical charge, electrical experiments could from then on be conducted almost wherever and whenever one wished.

When news about the latest findings in Europe had reached colonial America, a group of Philadelphians, led by Franklin, from 1747 started to perform electrical experiments on their own, with the help of a glass tube sent by Peter Collinson and a generator supplied by the proprietor of Pennsylvania, Thomas Penn.<sup>29</sup> The experiments conducted by Franklin and his fellow-Philadelphians in the late forties and early fifties led to many new insights in the study of electrical phenomena, such as the distinction between

27 Chaplin, *The First Scientific American*, 133–134, 155.

28 J.L. Heilbron, *Electricity in the 17th and 18th centuries. A study of early modern physiology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 312–316; C. de Pater, *Petrus van Musschenbroek (1692–1761), een newtoniaans natuuronderzoeker* (Utrecht: Elinkwijk, 1979), 41–44.

29 Chaplin, *The First Scientific American*, 106; Delbourgo, *A most amazing scene of wonders*, 30–31.

conductive and nonconductive materials, the distinction between “negative” and “positive” charge, the notions of circulation and equilibrium of electrical flows and the significance of pointed objects in conducting electricity (which eventually led to the invention of the lightning rod). Franklin described these in *Experiments and observations on electricity*, composed in the form of a series of essays addressed to Peter Collinson, which was first published in London in 1751 and went through four more English editions until 1774. French editions in 1752 and 1756 followed, plus another nine in Italian, German and Latin until the 1770s.

The work on electricity established Franklin’s reputation as a first-rate “natural philosopher” in the Dutch Republic too. Petrus van Musschenbroek in 1759 addressed a reverential letter to Franklin in which he (at Franklin’s request) supplied a list of authors who had written on electricity but added that “nobody had done more to unveil the mysteries of electricity than Franklin” himself.<sup>30</sup> After 1760, Franklin traveled to the Low Countries twice and extended his network of Dutch contacts to include, among others, Jean Allamand and other professors in Leiden. He later corresponded with the founders of the Batavian society of experimental philosophy in Rotterdam, which appointed him a corresponding member of the society in 1771.<sup>31</sup>

Dutch researchers, meanwhile, made significant advances in the study of another sort of electrical phenomena: electricity in animals. It had long been known that some types of fish, such as sea torpedoes, Nile catfish or South American eels, were capable of exerting powerful numbing effects on other animals and even on humans. In the first half of the eighteenth century, the dominant explanation of this intriguing phenomenon was a mechanical one. According to this explanation, proposed by Réaumur in 1714, the contractions of the muscles of the fish could be related to elastic actions of tin “mechanical springs” in its body.<sup>32</sup> However, a report by a British surgeon, Dale Ingram,

30 Petrus van Musschenbroek to Benjamin Franklin, 15 April 1759, in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 8:329.

31 Joost Mertens, “The honour of Dutch seamen: Benjamin Franklin’s theory of oil on troubled waters and its epistemological aftermath,” *Physics Today* 59, no. 1 (2006): 36–41; H. Hardenberg, “Benjamin Franklin en Nederland,” *Bijdragen voor de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 5 (1950–1951): 213–230, 215–217, 219–220; Franklin had a copy of the laws of the Batavian society and the first two volumes of its *Transactions* in his library, see Wolf and Hayes, *The library of Benjamin Franklin*, 109 nos. 239–240.

32 Peter Koehler, Stanley Finger and Marco Piccolino, “The ‘eels’ of South America: Mid-18th century Dutch contributions in the theory of animal electricity,” *Journal of the History of Biology* 42 (2009): 715–763, 719, 723–724; Delbourgo, *A most amazing scene of wonders*, 176–180.

who had lived in Suriname and who had personally experienced the shocking effects of the eel, suggested that a kind of “electrical energy or spring” might be involved. Ingram’s account, which appeared in English and German journals in 1750, prompted one of the scholars who had assisted at the original Leyden jar experiment, Jean Allamand, to make further inquiries.

Allamand addressed himself to an old acquaintance from the days when he worked as tutor in the household of the Leiden professor of experimental philosophy Willem Jacob ‘s Gravesande, his nephew Laurens Storm van ‘s Gravesande. Storm van ‘s Gravesande was thoroughly at home in Dutch Guiana. He was first secretary to the then commander of Essequibo in 1738, and had a decade later risen to be director-general of Essequibo and Demerara. During a brief stay in the Netherlands in 1750 he had, with Allamand, experienced firsthand the powerful effects of the Leyden jar. Back in Essequibo, ‘s Gravesande penned a detailed reply to Allamand’s inquiries about the eel in the Guiana rivers. The most striking part of his account, which Allamand published in 1755 in the transactions of the newly founded *Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen* in Haarlem, concerned the resemblance between the effects of the eel and those of the Leyden jar. “If one touches the fish,” ‘s Gravesande wrote, “[the eel] produces the same effect as the electricity that I felt with you, while holding in a hand the bottle that was connected to an electrified tube by an iron wire.”<sup>33</sup>

While Allamand and ‘s Gravesande did not yet state explicitly that the numbing effects of the eel were in fact an *electrical* phenomenon, and not a *mechanical* one, as Réaumur had claimed, this was the conclusion which Dutch scholars drew as more and more reports about the eel came in from Guiana and a specimen of the fish was carefully studied in Leiden. What particularly stimulated Dutch scholars was the arrival of an extensive account by Frans van der Lott from Essequibo (who had collaborated with Storm van ‘s Gravesande and who knew the effects of the Leyden jar firsthand) and the publication of a detailed description of the fish by Johan Frederik Gronovius’ son, Laurens Theodoor. The prominence of Dutch scholars in research on this subject was no accident. The Netherlands was in the middle decades of the eighteenth century at the forefront of what the French nineteenth-century biologist Georges Cuvier called the transformation of the natural history of fishes into

33 Koehler, Finger and Piccolino, “The “eels” of South America,” 727–731; Jean Nicolas Sébastien Allamand, “Kort verhaal van de uitwerkwelen, welke een Amerikaanse vis veroorzaakt op de geenen die hem aanraaken,” *Verhandelingen uitgegeeven door de Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen te Haarlem*, 2 (1755): 372–379; an English translation of this account is given in Koehler et al’s article.



“a truly scientific form.”<sup>34</sup> The leading ichthyologist of the 1730s, Peter Artedi, moved from Sweden via England to the Dutch Republic. His *magnum opus Ichthyologia* was posthumously published in Leiden by his compatriot Linnaeus, who had traveled to the Netherlands a few months before.<sup>35</sup> Extensive collections of fishes from various parts of the world were built by Albertus Seba in Amsterdam and by Johannes Frederik and Laurens Theodoor Gronovius in Leiden. These collections, and Artedi’s work, were the basis of a series of detailed case-studies and path-breaking general surveys on ichthyology, such as the *Museum ichthyologicum*, the *Zoophylacium Gronovianum* and the *Locupletissimi rerum naturalium Thesauri accurata descriptio*, published in the 1750s and 1760s.<sup>36</sup>

The findings of the Dutch researchers soon became known in the scholarly world at large. Translations of the texts by Allamand, Van Musschenbroek, Gronovius and Van der Lott began to circulate in Latin and German in the late fifties, sixties and seventies.<sup>37</sup> The first publication in English to affirm the electrical nature of the eel was a book on the natural history of Guiana by Edward Bancroft of Massachusetts, in 1769. Bancroft had worked as a physician in Essequibo between about 1763 and 1767 and he knew Van der Lott personally. According to James Delbourgo, his “experimental demonstrations of the eel’s electricity closely followed those already conducted by the Dutch, from whom he had doubtless learned much.”<sup>38</sup> Bancroft’s book triggered a wave of experiments and observations on electrical fishes both in colonial America and in England. David Rittenhouse, Ebenezer Kinnersley, Isaac Bartram and other fellows of the American Philosophical Society

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- 34 Georges Cuvier, *Historical portrait of the progress of ichthyology from its origins to our own time*, ed. Theodore W. Pietsch, trans. Abby J. Simpson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 95–104.
  - 35 Anne Wheeler, “Peter Artedi, founder of modern ichthyology,” *Proceedings V Congress of European Ichthyology, Stockholm 1985* (Stockholm: Swedish Museum of Natural History 1987), 3–10.
  - 36 Cuvier, *Historical portrait*, 99, 105–107; Laurens Theodorus Gronovius, *Museum ichthyologicum*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Theodoor Haak, 1754–1756), idem; *Zoophylacium Gronovianum*, 3 vols. (Leiden: Theodoor Haak, 1763–1781); Albertus Seba, *Locupletissimi rerum naturalium Thesauri accurata descriptio*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam: Van Waesbergen, 1735–1765); Hendrik Engels’ *alphabetical list of Dutch zoological cabinets and menageries*, ed. Pieter Smit (2nd ed. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1986), 104–105, 249–250.
  - 37 Koehler, Finger and Piccolino, “The ‘eels’ of South America,” 745–746.
  - 38 Andrew Bancroft, *An essay on the natural history of Guiana in South America* (London: T. Becket and P.A.de Hondt, 1769) 194–199; Delbourgo, *A most amazing scene of wonders*, 167, 169–171, 180–181.

carried out experiments with an electrical eel in Philadelphia in 1773, which were promptly reported to England.<sup>39</sup> The crowning achievement was a series of experiments conducted by John Walsh in London in the 1770s at the instigation of Benjamin Franklin. Walsh was able to actually observe a *spark* at the moment when the eel discharged. This clinched the argument about the fish's electrical properties. In his eulogy for Walsh in 1775, the President of the Royal Society did not fail to make special mention of the contributions of the Dutch researchers.<sup>40</sup>

### *Water, Winds and Currents*

Benjamin Franklin, meanwhile, turned his attention to other curious phenomena in the natural world, which in his view were particularly relevant for the shipping industry. The issues which caught his interest concerned the effect of oil on water and the pattern of winds and currents in the Atlantic. In his quest to solve these aquatic riddles, Franklin helped to bring two circuits of knowledge, which normally functioned in largely separate social spheres, together temporarily. These were the circuit of practitioners and the circuit of academics and members of learned societies, which were described in the introduction of this essay.

Contacts between these different circuits of knowledge in the Atlantic world as such were not unusual. Cadwallader Colden, for example, wrote in 1744 to Gronovius that he had learned from "Mohawk Indians" that "when they were quite faint with travel and fasting" their spirits could be "wonderfully" restored with the roots of particular plants. In another letter, he remarked that his "negroes told [him] that they have kinds of maize in Africa very different from any in this country."<sup>41</sup> Edward Bancroft described how he had called on Indians and slaves to assist in his inquiries about the natural history of Guiana.<sup>42</sup> What was different in the case of the issues broached by Franklin, however, were the scale and the methods by which knowledge from various circuits were, at least temporarily, brought together. As with research on electricity, Dutch actors again played an important role in moving the process of inquiry forward.

39 Hindle, *David Rittenhouse*, 98–100; Stearns, *Science in the British colonies*, 615–616.

40 Koehler, Finger and Piccolino, "The 'eels' of South America," 746–750; Delbourgo, *A most amazing scene of wonders*, 196–198.

41 Colden to Gronovius (n.d., probably 1744), in Gray, ed., *Selections from the scientific correspondence of Cadwallader Colden*, 9–16, esp. 13–14, Colden to Gronovius, in idem, 29 October 1745, 16–18, esp. 17.

42 E.g. Bancroft, *Essay*, 136, 304.

Inquiries on the behavior of water were triggered by a contribution of Franklin to the *Philosophical Transactions* in 1774. In this brief essay, Franklin reported how during a voyage on a vessel in the British fleet headed for an assault on Louisbourg (Cape Breton) in 1757 he had observed that the wakes of two ships were smoother than the others and, when inquiring of the captain for the reason, he had been told that the phenomenon must have been caused by the greasy water emptied into the sea by the ships' cooks. Remembering later that, long ago, he had come across a remark in Pliny's *Natural history* that "everybody is aware that...all sea water is made smooth by oil," Franklin resolved, during his stay in England in the sixties and seventies, to find out more about the effects of stilling of waves by means of oil by carrying out a number of experiments. In addition, Franklin received some first- or second-hand accounts (including a letter by an official of the Dutch East-India Company) on the smoothing effects of oil observed by seamen or fishermen. Reflecting on these findings, Franklin suggested that oil could, under certain conditions, be usefully employed to diminish the wrinkling raising capacity of the wind, and thus smooth the waves and enhance the safety of ships and crews.<sup>43</sup>

Margaret Deacon, who summarized this account in her magisterial study on scientists and the sea, does not make mention of any follow-up to Franklin's publication.<sup>44</sup> Actually, however, the report *did* cause a stir, and nowhere more so than in the Dutch Republic. The following chain of events shows again that colonial possessions were not a *sine qua non* for the role of Dutch actors in flows of knowledge. Cross-Atlantic networks of knowledge could thrive independently from the existence of colonial empires.

One of Franklin's experiments in London, at Green Park in 1773, was witnessed by three acquaintances with a Dutch background: Count Willem Bentinck, one of the most powerful noblemen in Holland and member of the governing board of the University of Leiden, his son John Bentinck, captain in the Royal Navy, and Jean Allamand.<sup>45</sup> After returning to the Netherlands, Allamand repeated Franklin's experiments with the stilling effects of oil in a canal in Leiden in the presence of a number of friends: a retired naval captain, a natural philosopher and a merchant and cloth manufacturer, Frans van

43 Benjamin Franklin, William Brownrigg and Mr. Farrish, "Of the stilling of waves by means of oil," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 64 (1774): 445–460.

44 Margaret Deacon, *Scientists and the sea 1650–1900. A study of marine science* (London/New York: Academic Press, 1971), 199–201.

45 Joost Mertens, "The honour of Dutch seamen: Benjamin Franklin's theory of oil on troubled waters and its epistemological aftermath," 4–5.

Lelyveld.<sup>46</sup> It was Van Lelyveld who brought the issue into the public square. He did so, first by making inquiries among friends, acquaintances and other interested persons scattered all over the maritime provinces of the Dutch Republic whether they knew anything about the practice of smoothing waves by pouring oil or a similar substance; secondly, by promising a reward for the best essay on the subject; and thirdly, by publishing, in 1775, a 200-page treatise containing all replies and reports, plus translations of selections from the writings on the topic by “the very famous English philosopher Benj. Franklin.” This lengthy treatise was later translated into French.<sup>47</sup> While preparing his publication, Van Lelyveld had written to Franklin himself asking him for “any emendations or additions” to his original piece. Van Lelyveld was particularly interested to know whether the use of oil on water was known among “fishermen and navigators” in colonial America too (as Franklin had been silent on this point in his original tract).<sup>48</sup>

The most important finding of Van Lelyveld’s wide-ranging survey was that the practice of stilling waves by means of oil turned out to be not only known as far back as the time of Pliny, but was in fact still common knowledge among different groups of seamen and fishermen in Holland and in many other parts of the world, although this knowledge was spread unevenly among groups and groups in different localities were often not aware of its presence at other places.<sup>49</sup> Knowledge *did* exist, but was localized. Van Lelyveld sent six copies of his treatise to Franklin, with kind regards from Allamand.<sup>50</sup>

Another issue that caught Franklin’s interest concerned the behavior of winds and currents in the Atlantic. What patterns could be observed? How could these patterns be explained? Members of learned societies, especially in the English-speaking Atlantic world, had more than once engaged with those questions, but not in a sustained fashion. In the early days of the Royal Society the issue was discussed by, among others, Isaac Vossius and Edmond Halley. During his stay in England after 1670, Vossius published an English version of his book on winds, tides and currents, *A treatise concerning the motion of the seas and winds*, which had first appeared as *De motu marium et ventorum liber*

46 Mertens, “Honour of Dutch seamen,” 6–9.

47 Ibid., 7.

48 Frans van Lelyveld to Benjamin Franklin, 9 December 1774, in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 373.

49 Frans van Lelyveld, *Berichten en Prijs-vragen over het storten van olie, traan, teer, of andere dryvende stoffen, in zee-gevaren* (Leiden: Johannes le Maire, 1775), 1–4, 14, 22, 40–42 and appendices A – K.

50 Van Lelyveld to Franklin, 11 March 1775, in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 519; Van Lelyveld to Franklin, 31 July 1777, in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 231.

in Amsterdam in 1663. In this treatise Vossius refused to admit any motion of the seas and winds "which I could not if it were necessary confirm by infinite Testimonies and Experiments of sea men."<sup>51</sup> Edmond Halley in 1686 published a thematic map of the Northern and Southern Atlantic, which for the first time used showed rows of strokes (and sometimes arrowheads) as symbols to indicate the direction and strength of winds. This wind pattern according to Halley was repeatedly reproduced on English and Dutch charts in the first decades of the eighteenth century.<sup>52</sup>

Thanks to Franklin, interest in this issue revived in scholarly circles about 1770. Franklin suggested it might be useful for seafarers seeking fast passage across the Atlantic (such as captains of packet boats) to have a chart depicting "the Dimention Course and Swiftness" of the current along the American coast commonly called by seamen "the Gulph Stream." At Franklin's request, a captain from Nantucket, Timothy Folger, marked the Gulf Stream on an existing chart, which was sent to the Post Office in London and printed by Mount & Page in 1768. Revised versions of the chart were published by Franklin himself in 1782 and 1786, the latter one in the second volume of *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*. Another chart of the Atlantic currents was published by an English physician, Charles Blagden in the transactions of the Royal Society in 1781. Systematic research on patterns of winds and currents in the Atlantic Ocean really started with the work of a former seaman and surveyor of the East-India Company, James Rennell, who collected a huge mass of data on every ocean of the world from ships' logbooks and other sources. Although his *magnum opus* on currents in the Atlantic Ocean was not published until 1832, some of his ideas and findings circulated in Britain (and beyond) long before that date. A Dutch translation of Rennell's observations on a current to the Westward of the Scilly islands, first published in the *Philosophical Transactions* in 1793, appeared in Amsterdam a year later. Added to the translation of Rennell's text were translations of selected parts from Blagden's article of 1781 and summaries of observations on the Gulf Stream published in an American magazine, *The American Museum*.<sup>53</sup>

51 Isaac Vossius, *A treatise concerning the motion of the sea* (London 1677, facsimile edition, New York: Delmar 1993); "The Author to the Reader," H.J. Burstyn, "Theories of winds and ocean currents from the discoveries to the end of the seventeenth century," *Terrae Incognitae. The Annals of the Society for the History of Discoveries* 3 (1971): 7–31.

52 Arthur H. Robinson, *Early thematic mapping in the history of cartography* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 46–48.

53 Deacon, *Scientists and the sea*, 220–222; *Waarnemingen over een stroom welke dikwyls stand grypt ten westen van Scilly...door James Rennell...uit het Engelsch vertaald, en met*

## Facilities and Forces

The growth of shipping in the North Atlantic and its increased regularity since the late seventeenth century was no doubt an important underlying factor that facilitated the emergence of transatlantic networks of knowledge. "The growing maritime commerce [between 1675 and 1740], particularly in the Leeward Islands, Jamaica, South Carolina, and Pennsylvania, increased the flow of transatlantic news and narrowed the space and time between colonies," Ian Steele has written.<sup>54</sup> Communication thus became faster and more regular as traffic increased. The consequences of this change were not restricted to the English Atlantic world. Communication between British American colonies and regions *outside* the British empire became easier as well. Alexander Garden in Charleston remarked for example in a letter to Carolus Linnaeus in 1755 that there were four or five ships every year sailing from South Carolina to Rotterdam which could take mail.<sup>55</sup>

Although packet boat services between England and the West Indies were in operation on a regular basis since 1744, and between England and North America since 1755,<sup>56</sup> actors in transatlantic networks of knowledge commonly used other channels of communication to send each other parcels and letters. These circuits of exchange could only be maintained if it was easy to find people who could be trusted to deliver packages safely and promptly to the right destination. The persons whom members of the scholarly Atlantic regarded – next to kinsmen, friends and fellow-scholars – as the most reliable carriers of messages, were merchants and, to a lesser extent, clergymen (or their relatives). The growth and persistence of the scholarly Atlantic was in this way not only supported by the expansion of shipping but also by the development of commercial networks.<sup>57</sup> Johan Frederik Gronovius and his correspondents made mention in their letters of merchants whom they considered a safe pair of hands for the transmission of letters and packages. Lewis Johnston in the 1730s asked Gronovius to leave packages in the care of "mr. Bernard van der

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*eenige Aantekeningen vermeerderd door Jacob Florijn* (Amsterdam: G. Hulst v. K., 1794), esp. Introduction, A3 (and footnote) and Appendix.

54 Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic 1675–1740. An exploration of communication and community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 275.

55 Alexander Garden to Carolus Linnaeus, 15 March 1755, *The Linnaean Correspondence*, linnaeus.c18.net, letter L886 (consulted 17 July 2012).

56 Steele, *The English Atlantic*, 10. The first packet service to the West Indies, started in 1702, was discontinued after 1715. See Steele, chapter 9.

57 Cf. also Delbourgo, *A most amazing scene of wonders*, 18, 22.

Grift,” merchant at the Keizersgracht in Amsterdam.<sup>58</sup> Gronovius himself relied for his safe correspondence on Hudig and Papin in Rotterdam and on Messrs. Van der Velde and Messrs. Van Zadelhoff in Amsterdam.<sup>59</sup> Religious networks sometimes fulfilled a similar function as networks of merchants. There existed in the eighteenth century regular contacts between the Reformed Church in the Netherlands and Dutch-speaking Protestant communities in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.<sup>60</sup> Thus, Gronovius also sent messages to British America with Protestant ministers and a son “of the Archbishop of Uppsala.”<sup>61</sup>

However, ocean shipping and commercial and religious networks should be seen as vehicles of communication rather than as the main driving forces of the development of circuits of knowledge. True, some members of the scholarly Atlantic, such as Colden, Logan, Franklin, Collinson or Van Lelyveld were entrepreneurs themselves. Others, such as Storm van ’s Gravesande, were in the service of a chartered company. A few, such as Allamand, were trained as ministers of a Protestant church. A market for curiosities, instruments and publications on science and scholarship definitely did exist.<sup>62</sup>

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- 58 Johnston to Gronovius, 20 November 1734, National Library of the Netherlands, The Hague, Ms. 121 D 6, no. 37.
- 59 Gronovius to Richardson, 2 September 1738, in *Extracts from the literary and scientific correspondence of Richard Richardson*, 375–380, esp. 375; Gronovius to Richardson, 7 December 1739, in idem, 381–382, esp. 381; Gronovius to Linnaeus, 11 November 1738, *The Linnaean Correspondence*, linnaeus.c18.net, letter Lo263 (consulted 27 July 2012); Gronovius to Colden, 6 August 1743, in *Selections from the scientific correspondence of Cadwallader Colden*, ed. Gray, 4–7, 6; Gronovius to Colden, 3 April 1744, in idem, 7–8 esp. 8.
- 60 Joyce D. Goodfriend, “The Dutch book trade in colonial New York City: The transatlantic connection,” in *Books between Europe and the Americas. Connections and communities, 1620–1860*, ed. Leslie Howsam and James Raven (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 128–156, esp. 134–146; Joseph H. Dubbs and William J. Hinke, *The Reformed Church in Pennsylvania*, part IX (Lancaster: The Society, 1902) chapter 7.
- 61 Gronovius to Colden, 6 August 1743, in *Selections from the scientific correspondence of Cadwallader Colden*, ed. Gray, 4–7, esp. 4; Gronovius to Bartram, 2 July 1750, in Darlington, ed., *Memorials*, 358; Gronovius to Bartram, 10 June 1754, in idem, 360–363, esp. 361–362.
- 62 Cf. Cook, *Matters of exchange, passim*; Daniel Margócsy, “Advertising cadavers in the republic of letters: anatomical publications in the early modern Netherlands,” *British Journal for the History of Science*, 42 (2009): 187–210; idem, “A museum of wonders or a cemetery of corpses? The commercial exchange of anatomical collections in Early Modern Netherlands,” in *Silent messengers: The circulation of material objects of knowledge in the Early Modern Low Countries*, ed. Sven Dupré and Christoph Lüthy (Berlin-Münster: LIT Verlag, 2011), 185–215.

Yet there is no evidence that commercial or religious interests and values were the mainspring of the emergence and evolution of knowledge networks. Circulation of knowledge was facilitated by these factors, but was only partly caused by it.

To explain the structure and dynamics of the transatlantic circuits of knowledge we should also take the values, attitudes and informal codes of the Republic of Letters into account. The scholarly Atlantic was the Republic of Letters writ large. The creation and maintenance of transoceanic networks of knowledge offered substantial benefits to their members on both sides of the Atlantic. These benefits did not (primarily) consist in material rewards, but were mainly paid out in the form of status. The rules of the game were similar to those described by Anne Goldgar in her anthropology of the European Republic of Letters between ca. 1680 and 1750. The essential principles of the Republic of Letters were an ethic of cooperation and reciprocity, an ideal of openness and the assignment of status on the basis of merit (in the eyes of colleagues) plus the idea of primacy of harmony over religious and political dissension.<sup>63</sup> Generosity could be more rewarding than striving for commercial gain.<sup>64</sup>

The principles of the Republic of Letters also underlay the development of the networks of knowledge in the North Atlantic in the eighteenth century. Although relations between, on the one hand, “colonial observers” in British American colonies and Dutch Guiana and, on the other hand, “metropolitans” in Britain and Continental Europe initially may have been unequal,<sup>65</sup> such connections nevertheless could be beneficial for both sides, as we have seen. For colonials, being a valued supplier of specimens and information in regular correspondence with established scholars in Britain or Continental Europe served as a mark of distinction and provided them with admission to a larger scholarly world. For metropolitans, engaging in correspondence with colonials presented them not only with a useful source of “raw materials” for their own work but also enhanced their status among fellow-members of the scholarly world: the more clients and admirers, the higher the rank. Once admitted to the “club,” colonials could attain a higher status on the basis of merit, too, as the case of Franklin proves.

63 Anne Goldgar, *Impolite learning. Conduct and community in the Republic of Letters, 1680–1750* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

64 R.P.W. Visser, *The zoological work of Petrus Camper (1722–1789)* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1985), 48; Marc J. Ratcliff, “Abraham Trembley’s strategy of generosity and the scope of celebrity in the mid-eighteenth century,” *Isis*, 95 (2004): 555–575.

65 See for this distinction Delbourgo, *A most amazing scene of wonders*, 18–20.



The idea that harmony among scholars should overrule religious and political differences, was strongly in evidence in the scholarly Atlantic as well. Even during wartime, scholars from different countries were supposed to maintain friendly relations as usual. During the War of the Austrian Succession, for example, John Bartram complained to Gronovius that “it was very discouraging to think that all [his] labour and charges” might fall into the hands of French or Spanish privateers, who would take “no further care of them than to heave them overboard into the sea. If [he] could know that they fell into the hands of men of learning and curiosity [he] would be more easy about them.” Cadwallader Colden had found a practical solution: on the outside of his packet to Gronovius he had added a kind request in French, asking privateers to send the content “to the gentlemen of the Royal Garden in Paris.”<sup>66</sup>

This chapter has shown that Dutch actors, and especially scholars based in Leiden, played a significant role as creators and brokers of knowledge in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. Remarkably, their role in the development and maintenance of networks of knowledge in the Atlantic persisted long after the Dutch Republic had entered its terminal phase as an economic and political power. How can this phenomenon be explained? Both generational and structural factors should be taken into account. The influence of Dutch scholars in Atlantic circuits of knowledge in the eighteenth century was in part a consequence of the peak in the international appeal of Dutch universities reached between ca. 1680 and 1730.<sup>67</sup> The number of foreign students flocking to Dutch universities in that period was higher than ever before or since. In the first quarter of the eighteenth century, almost a third of all graduates of Dutch graduates came from abroad.<sup>68</sup> Among the Dutch institutions of higher learning, the University of Leiden proved to be especially attractive to English-speaking students.

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66 Bartram to Gronovius, 6 December 1745, in Darlington, ed., *Memorials*, 352–354, esp. 353, Colden to Gronovius, 30 May 1746, in *Selections from the scientific correspondence of Cadwallader Colden*, ed. Gray, 19–20, esp. 19.

67 For an overview of the Dutch infrastructure of knowledge in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Willem Frijhoff, *La société néerlandaise et ses gradués, 1575–1814* (Maarssen: APA Holland, 1981) and Karel Davids, “Amsterdam as a centre of learning in the Dutch Golden Age, c. 1580–1700,” in *Urban achievement in early modern Europe: Golden Ages in Antwerp, Amsterdam and London*, ed. Patrick O’Brien, Derek Keene, Marjolein ‘t Hart and Herman van der Wee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001), 305–323.

68 Frijhoff, *La société néerlandaise et ses gradués*, 98–99 and annexe 2.

Of all students from the British Isles and North America in the Netherlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, nearly three-quarters took a degree in Leiden. Between 1680 and 1730, more than 860 Scottish students alone matriculated there.<sup>69</sup>

The “British wave” to the Dutch universities, especially Leiden, between 1680 and 1730 had long-term effects in two ways. First, it created a network of alumni in the English-speaking world on both sides of the Atlantic, who had a first-hand acquaintance with the Netherlands and could also act as carriers of Dutch cultural and intellectual influence. Esther Mijers has argued that the fact that Scotland became part of the European Republic of Letters was a result of its “cultural and institutional connections with the United Provinces.”<sup>70</sup> A number of correspondents in America and Britain in Gronovius’ network, such as Lewis Johnston, Isaac Lawson, Richard Richardson and Phineas Bond, were alumni of Leiden University as well.<sup>71</sup> Secondly, the presence of so many English-speaking students in Leiden offered an opportunity for Dutch students to learn and practice the English language. This probably explains why Johan Frederik Gronovius possessed such a good command of English. One of the striking aspects of Gronovius’ correspondence is that he communicated with his British and American correspondents not in Latin or in French, but in English. Thus, the “old boys network” of the Leiden alumni formed significant social capital, which helped to underpin the role of Dutch actors in Atlantic circuits of knowledge.

In addition, there were factors that kept this role intact even after the attractiveness of the Dutch universities for English-speaking students had begun to decline after the 1730s. The Netherlands also boasted an abundance of cultural capital embedded in its infrastructure of knowledge: its libraries, botanical gardens, anatomical theaters, collections of instruments and cabinets of curiosities and publishing houses constantly turning out books for both foreign and domestic markets. A large part of this infrastructure remained in place until at least the last decades of the eighteenth century. Jean Allamand was still busily networking between foreign authors and Leiden publishers in the 1760s and 1770s. The Gronovius collection of fish remained in Leiden till Laurens Theodoor’s death in 1777, when it became a prized object for foreign buyers. The natural history collection of Stadtholder

69 Ibid., 101, Esther Mijers, “*News from the Republic of Letters*”: Scottish students, Charles Mackie and the United Provinces, 1650–1750 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 39.

70 Mijers, “*News from the Republic of Letters*,” 7.

71 R.W. Innes Smith, *English-speaking students of medicine at the University of Leyden* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1932), 26, 129, 138, 194.

Willem V, founded in 1756, was so highly regarded by scientists in France that they could hardly wait to have it entirely moved to France after the conquest of the Netherlands in 1795.<sup>72</sup>

The growth and persistence of this extensive infrastructure of knowledge in the Dutch Republic was in no small measure due to the vast amount of private wealth amassed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some of its citizens could easily afford to pay for costly publications out of their own pocket. The Amsterdam banker George Clifford published in 1738 the *Hortus Cliffortianus*, a systematic description of the plants in his private botanical garden made by Carolus Linnaeus, at his own expense, and refused to sell any copies on the market. The 200-odd copies distributed by 1739 were all given as gifts. When the first copies finally *did* come on the market via auctions, they fetched 28 guilders apiece.<sup>73</sup> Johan Frederik Gronovius, with an estate valued at more than 63,000 guilders, financed the publication of Linnaeus' *Systema naturae* and his own *Flora Virginica* himself.<sup>74</sup>

Private wealth could be transformed into physical infrastructure for knowledge production too. A prime example is the *Teylers Stichting*, a learned institution in Haarlem founded in 1778, which was funded from the immense fortune left by merchant-entrepreneur Pieter Teyler van der Hulst. The curator of the *Stichting*, Martinus van Marum, in 1783 managed to persuade the directors to order a huge electrical machine from the Amsterdam instrument maker John Cuthbertson, which for a long time was the most powerful one of its kind in Europe. Indeed, Teyler's device enjoyed such a high reputation in the scholarly world that scientists abroad, such as Alessandro Volta in Italy, sometimes expressly asked Van Marum to run particular experiments with his unique "grande machine électrique."<sup>75</sup> In these ways, the past creation of wealth

72 Rietje van Vliet, "Makelaar in intellect. Johannes Nicolaas Sebastiaan Allamand (1713–1787) als intermediair tussen schrijvers en uitgevers," *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 1 (2004): 103–122; Hendrik Engels' *alphabetical list*, 104–105; *Catalogue of fish collected and described by Laurence Theodor Gronow now in the British Museum* (London: Woodfall and Kinder, 1854), v–vii; M. Lemire, "La France et les collections du stathouder Guillaume V d'Orange," in *Een vorstelijke dierentuin. De menagerie van Willem V*, ed. B.C. Sliggers and A.A. Wertheim (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1994), 87–114.

73 George Clifford to Carolus Linnaeus, 20 April 1739, *The Linnaean Correspondence*, linnaeus.c18.net, letter L0280 (consulted 18 August 2012); Gronovius to Linnaeus, 12 July 1739, *The Linnaean Correspondence*, linnaeus.c18.net, letter L0291 (consulted 18 August 2012).

74 Maarten Prak, *Gezeten burgers. De elite in een Hollandse stad 1700–1780* (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw 1985), 388.

75 W.W. Mijnhardt, *Tot Heil van 't Menschdom. Culturele genootschappen in Nederland, 1750–1815* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988), 302–306; Van Marum to Volta, 23 August 1785, in

allowed Dutch actors to continue to play a key role in the production and circulation of knowledge independently of the status of the Netherlands as a colonial power in the Atlantic.

## Conclusion

This chapter has focused on actors and their connections, more specifically on the role of *Dutch* actors in scholarly circuits of knowledge between Britain, the Dutch Republic and colonies in the Americas. The perspective has shifted from institutional forces such as imperial governments, religious organizations, trading companies and scientific societies to network-building by individuals, or groups of people, from below. What this approach reveals is that even if some participants were more equal than others, the structure of the networks of knowledge in the eighteenth century was polycentric rather than monocentric and did not show any kind of enduring hierarchy. Moreover, this different perspective has also allowed us to catch a glimpse of the networks' dynamics: circuits of knowledge in the North Atlantic became over time more integrated in a spatial sense, existing circuits of knowledge on a specific subject, such as plants, also went on to serve as channels for knowledge on other topics, such as fish or electricity, and circuits of knowledge which usually functioned in separate social spheres, e.g. those of scholars and seamen, could temporarily be brought together. In all these respects, Dutch actors played a much more significant part in the development and maintenance of knowledge networks in the North Atlantic than a top-down, institutional perspective would suggest.

The emergence and evolution of these knowledge networks was aided by the growth of shipping as well as by the development of commercial and religious networks, but they were not *driven* by these forces. Likewise, they *could* be connected to colonial possessions, but they were not necessarily dependent on their presence. To explain the structure and dynamics of the networks of knowledge, the values, attitudes and informal codes developed in the European Republic of Letters should be taken into account as well. In the eighteenth century, the Republic of Letters expanded in the Atlantic world irrespective of existing borders between different colonial empires.

In this scholarly Atlantic, Dutch actors played a significant role as creators and brokers of knowledge thanks to a combination of generational and structural factors. They could build both on the social capital formed in the heyday

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*La correspondance de A. Volta et M. van Marum*, ed. J. Bosscha (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1905) 8–9; Volta to Van Marum, 26 July 1786, in *idem*, 17–18, Volta to Van Marum, 25 June 1787, 26–31.

of English-speaking students to the University of Leiden between 1680 and 1730 and on the pre-existing, highly-developed infrastructure of knowledge in the Dutch Republic, as well as on the substantial wealth accumulated by its citizens. These factors may explain why Dutch actors continued to play a prominent role in the development and maintenance of networks of knowledge in the Atlantic long after the Dutch Republic had started to lose its status as a first-rate economic and political power.<sup>76</sup>

This essay has concentrated on connections between Britain, the Dutch Republic and British and Dutch colonies in the Americas, while showing along the way that the Netherlands in the eighteenth century in some respects served as a hub of knowledge for scholars from Sweden, France and Italy too. If we would expand the scope of the analysis to include all scholarly networks in the eighteenth-century Atlantic, the picture would doubtless be enriched, refined or modified at a number of points. On the one hand, we might expect to find many similarities to the patterns discussed above, given underlying constants such as the prevalence of values, attitudes and informal codes of the Republic of Letters or the persistence of the spatial location of cultural capital. On the other hand, we should not be surprised to discover that scholarly relations between France, French colonies and the Dutch Republic developed somewhat differently than the Anglo-Dutch connections discussed in this article. State agencies in France weighed more heavily in the accumulation and exchange of knowledge than in Britain, most Dutch scholars were more fluent in French than in English and French students did not flock to Dutch universities in the same numbers as students from England or Scotland. Spanish and Dutch networks of knowledge likewise showed interesting differences in structure and dynamics.<sup>77</sup> The scholarly Atlantic, in short, will definitely benefit from further comparative research.

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76 A similar discrepancy has been observed in the field of technology. The Dutch Republic was still regarded as a technological leader in Europe long after the rate of technological innovation had begun to decline, see Karel Davids, *The rise and decline of Dutch technological leadership. Technology, economy and culture in the Netherlands, 1350–1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

77 Davids, “Dutch and Spanish global networks of knowledge.”

# The “Dutch” “Atlantic” and the Dubious Case of Frans Post

Benjamin Schmidt

## I From Dutch Atlantic to European Exoticism

Did Frans Post paint Dutch Brazil? In 1879 – exactly 200 years after the death of Johan Maurits “the Brazilian” (1604–1679), the famously admired governor of the Dutch colony during its heyday who brought Post to Brazil as part of his princely entourage – the Rijksmuseum wagered its money brashly on the affirmative. In that year it acquired no fewer than three paintings by the artist, among the first to enter the permanent collections of the newly installed national museum, which arose in its current form a few years later in 1885 (another Post painting would be purchased in 1881 and two more before the close of the century).<sup>1</sup> In one of these early acquisitions, the *View of Itamaracá* (Figure 10.1), the director of the museum at that time, Johan Wilhelm Kaiser, perceived in the central figure on horseback none other than Governor Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen garbed in his “Brazilian costume.” Another painting represented “a house of a Dutch colonist in Brazil,” the proud owners strolling toward the portico-shaded entrance of their substantial New World home (Figure 10.2). And so it goes: the paintings told the story through pictures, like the *Itamaracá* canvas and the others, of the Dutch colonial presence in South America and the Netherlands’ prosperous empire in the Atlantic World.<sup>2</sup>

- 1 The three paintings are *View of Itamaracá* (1637), *Franciscan Convent* (ca. 1675–80), and *Riverside Village* (ca. 1675–1680). The well known *View of Olinda* (1662), to this day a star attraction at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, entered the collection (by purchase) in 1881. See Pedro Corrêa do Lago and Bia Corrêa do Lago, *Frans Post, 1612–1680: Catalogue Raisonné* (Milan: 5 Continents, 2007) [henceforth Corrêa do Lago, *Post*], cat. 1, 153–154; and cf. cat. 52 (the *View of Olinda*). On the place of Post in the Rijksmuseum’s collections, see Rebecca Parker Brien, “Who Owns Frans Post? Collecting Frans Post’s Brazilian Landscapes,” in *The Legacy of Dutch Brazil: The Long-Term Impact of a Short-Lived Atlantic Colony*, ed. Michiel van Groesen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 229–247. Note that a national (“rijks”) museum existed in the Netherlands in some form from the very late eighteenth century, yet the permanent and grand shape of the current Rijksmuseum came to be when the building that presently houses it opened to much acclaim in 1885.
- 2 Kaiser to the Minister of Binnenlandse Zaken, quoted in Brien, “Who Owns Frans Post?” The title of the late panel painting (Figure 10.2) has been updated in some recent



FIGURE 10.1 *Frans Post, View of Itamaracá, 1637, oil on canvas (63.5 × 89.5 cm), Rijksmuseum (object no. SK-A-4271), Amsterdam (on long-term loan to the Mauritshuis, The Hague).*



FIGURE 10.2 *Frans Post, Franciscan Convent, circa 1675–80, oil on panel (16.5 × 25 cm), Rijksmuseum (object no. SK-A-4273), Amsterdam.*

Only they did not: neither painting, in fact, highlights a Dutch scene per se, while both – along with the Rijksmuseum's impressive *View of Olinda* (Figure 10.3) and the vast majority of paintings done by Post in the intervening decades of production between these notably early and late compositions – present a tropical world that is hardly Dutch, perhaps Portuguese, and determinately exotic. What Post did paint was a new world of nature – lush, green, resplendent, intriguing, and seemingly indomitable – and the various European attempts to fit themselves into it. In the *View of Itamaracá*, likely the first oil painting by the artist executed in Brazil (he sketched landscapes and seascapes en route to South America and also produced several highly finished drawings, mostly undated, in ink and wash), a slender slice of Dutch life can be



FIGURE 10.3 *Frans Post, View of Olinda, 1662, oil on canvas (107.5 × 172.5 cm), Rijksmuseum (object no. SK-A-742), Amsterdam.*

catalogues (see, e.g., Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 336), yet it entered the collections of the Rijksmuseum as "Landschap met het huis van een Hollandse kolonist in Brazilië [Landscape with the house of a Dutch colonist in Brazil]." While the Rijksmuseum has recently changed this labeling ("Kerkelijk gebouw in Brazilië [Ecclesiastical (lit. churchly) building in Brazil]"), the older title, with its presumption of colonial imagery, lingers in the online (thus relatively recently vetted) description of the painting: <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/explore-the-collection/overview/frans-jansz-post/objects#/SK-A-4273,1> [accessed 15 June 2013]. Note also that, until the Rijksmuseum's reinstatement in 2013, the Post paintings in the collection were hung in the "History Section" of the museum, as they were understood to narrate the national history of the Netherlands.



detected in the background: beneath the meager town of Itamaracá, perched on the hill, rests a still smaller representation of Fort Orange, nestled on the coast. Yet the dominant subject of the painting, as Kaiser himself noted, is the tranquil scene of four figures, two African and two European, one of whom travels on horseback – in “the Portuguese mode of riding,” according to a contemporary label affixed to the painting around the time it entered the French royal collections in 1679.<sup>3</sup> This modest, languid progression does not embrace the high-born Dutch governor – the central figure barely registers his attendants’ attention – but offers instead a diverting device to animate the absorbing layers of the landscape: land (verdant), water (calm), and sky (clouded, yet this would change in later compositions).

While these visual elements might fluctuate somewhat over the years – smatterings of people come and go, as do the not terribly impressive and often decrepit man-made structures – they served chiefly to anchor and align Post’s compositions and to guide the viewer’s vision toward the far richer materials of the surrounding landscape. The magnificent *View of Olinda*, completed a quarter of a century later, by which time the painter could claim a productive career as a specialist of such scenes, centers on a dilapidated (but functional) cathedral, in front of which congregate an assembly of Catholic and presumably Portuguese parishioners. Cassocked (Franciscan) friars mill about the entrance, exchange greetings with broad-hatted (Portuguese) men and heavily veiled (Portuguese) women, while brightly dressed (African) slaves wait patiently below. Vying for the viewer’s attention, however, is the splendid *repoussoir*, left and right, which encompasses a sloth, monkey, anteater, armadillo, iguana, and giant toad; not to mention a pineapple, several gourds, and various species of American flora on which alight vividly hued birds. There is more to this substantial canvas – among Post’s largest – but there is barely a sign of the Dutch in Brazil. By the time Post produces his “house of a Dutch colonist in Brazil” – this late-in-life painting is now more properly labeled *Franciscan Convent* – he distills his composition to its essentials.<sup>4</sup> Palms fill the panel, both in the distant countryside (to the rear) and the dark *repoussoir* (to the right), where one imagines lurking the exotic fauna that the elderly painter can no longer quite delineate. There is, once again, a gathering of figures to train the eye to the heart of the composition; yet this modest muster is, once again, mostly dressed in the Portuguese style (the figure closest to the convent may be a nun; there is also a solitary slave). The structure in the center, furthermore – occupying a space laboriously cleared, one imagines, from the

3 Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 88; and see *ibid.*, 52, where the original label is reproduced.

4 Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, cat. 154.

thick vegetation of the tropics, which veritably threaten to subsume it anew – is surely no colonist's house, as the cross balanced on the rooftop ridge confirms. It is a house of Catholic worship, and imagining otherwise speaks more to nineteenth-century collectors' aspirations than seventeenth-century painterly intentions.

Frans Post's paintings of "Dutch" Brazil have been historically misread, not least since the Dutch moment in colonial Brazil (1630–1654), and the more extensive Dutch presence in the Atlantic that it is said to epitomize, have likewise been misconstrued. To recalibrate this essay's opening question: was there a Dutch Atlantic? The Dutch thrived in the Atlantic world, to be sure, especially in the early to middle decades of the seventeenth century, a period that overlaps with Post's sojourn in Brazil (1636–1644) and with the expansion of the West India Company's imperium: in North America (New Netherland), along the Coast of West Africa (including Loango-Angola), and encompassing the sizable swathe of South America conquered by Johan Maurits (seven captaincies of Brazil). There was not only a Dutch moment of expansion and empire in the Atlantic, but an exemplary constellation of colonies and forts, trade and settlement, which brought together considerable portions of the Atlantic basin – North, South, East, and West. But this impressive, optimistic, land-based empire quickly receded over the middle and later decades of the century – Angola was lost to the Portuguese in 1648, Brazil fell shortly after that (1654), and New Netherland reverted to English forces in 1664 and was rechristened New York. The Dutch West India Company itself was considerably diminished: it declared bankruptcy in 1674, after which it was dissolved.<sup>5</sup> But the Dutch do not so much disappear from the Atlantic in these years as shift discreetly to the background. Rather than maintaining a full-scale empire, they support smaller trading posts, modest plantations (in the Guianas), and industrious entrepôts working behind the scenes. They pursue inter-Atlantic shipping and other forms of exchange that capitalize on their well-honed skills as commercial intermediaries. The Dutch reconfigure their Atlantic world such that, if the façade of the imperial structure was no longer especially prominent – gone were the ambitious colonies in Brazil and North America; infrequent were any bona fide "houses of Dutch colonists" – there was much that remained nonetheless in the fine details of their Atlantic composition, apparent upon closer inspection (as the chapters in this volume amply demonstrate).

5 Willem Klooster, *The Dutch Moment in Atlantic History* (Ithaca, NY, [forthcoming]), Benjamin Schmidt, "The Dutch Atlantic: From Provincialism to Globalism," in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 163–190 and see also the Introduction to this volume.

These shifts are reflected, as well, in the Dutch cultural artifacts that engage with the Atlantic world, of which Post's paintings are among the most visually remarkable and deservedly well known. Post's oeuvre should be seen in the context of the changing fortunes of the Dutch both in the Atlantic and in Europe. Certainly, the perception of the Atlantic sphere altered over the seventeenth century from the perspective of the Netherlands: from a highly interested and patriotic conception of the Dutch place in America – the early decades of the century witnessed the development of topoi and depictions that closely linked the Netherlands with the New World and imagined a special kinship between the American indigenes and their Dutch allies, who would have shared (so it was proposed) a mutual antipathy toward an expansive Habsburg empire – to one that tended to dilute or even obscure the Dutch presence in the Atlantic.<sup>6</sup> In the later decades of the seventeenth century, as the Dutch lost most of their American colonies and suffered setbacks, as well, in European wars against France and Britain, they also lost their interest in the sort of provincial geographies of America that had up until that point prevailed. The number of sources addressing the Dutch in Brazil, for example, sharply decline (the colony of New Netherland had never featured particularly prominently in print or painting); and the popular refrain of "Spanish tyranny in America," a rallying cry for so many of the colonial factions, all but disappears.<sup>7</sup> The Dutch do produce over these years a considerable number of books, prints, maps, atlases, and images otherwise dedicated to the Atlantic world; yet they do not place much emphasis in these sources on the *Dutch* presence in the region or on Dutch aspirations in the West, real or illusory. They address, rather, a more widely European audience, and they speak to generically European (as opposed to Dutch, British, French, Spanish, and so on) interests in the Atlantic sphere. They produce texts and images that illustrate the tropical nature of the New World, describe the wondrous inhabitants of America (and Africa), and incorporate the Atlantic into broader forms of global geography. But they do not linger especially on any *Dutch* achievement or any Dutch angle in the Atlantic. They move, in short, from a form of patriotic geography to a formulation of European exoticism. Indeed, in the later decades of the seventeenth century the Dutch become leading intermediaries of geographic imagery – primary purveyors of descriptions of the

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6 A fuller version of this history can be found in Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570–1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) (on Spanish tyranny in America).

7 Klooster, *Dutch Moment in Atlantic History* (on Brazil); Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad*, esp. 315–316.

non-European world, in word and image, pitched to an audience of European consumers – just as they were becoming leading intermediaries of Atlantic trade.<sup>8</sup>

If Post's paintings do not fit these patterns perfectly – while cultural forms tend to track political and economic developments, they rarely trace them that precisely – they do correspond to the rough contours of Dutch activities in the Atlantic. Following an initial moment of direct engagement with the colonial project of Johan Maurits – the early paintings typically contain representations of Dutch forts and settlements, inconspicuous though these may be – Post's compositions turn thereafter to less localized and more broadly "exotic" scenes. After recording the Dutch in Brazil, that is, during their brief period of hegemony, Post deploys his landscapes to convey a more pleasingly generic sense of the exotic world. This in itself is not surprising. There was not much left to paint of *Dutch* Brazil after 1654 beyond the vestiges of a colony quickly squandered; exotic *naturalia* were more compelling. What does cause pause, however, and invite correction is the stubborn consensus among critics that Post's paintings somehow memorialized the Dutch imperial moment in Brazil, catalogued Dutch settlements and successes in the New World, and celebrated the Dutch presence in America – and, by extension, in the Atlantic. "Post's images of Brazil," runs a fairly typical assessment, "were expensive in his day and *undoubtedly* appealed to the Dutchman's patriotic sense of his nation as a world power with a global reach."<sup>9</sup> This undoubtedly is wrong, and this notion of a patriotic and particularly *Dutch* Atlantic misses the point: of the quality and nature of Posts' paintings, and of the shape and significance of the Dutch Atlantic. This fairly reflexive misreading of Post's oeuvre derives from and feeds into a greater misunderstanding: an incorrect sense of the early modern Dutch conception of and attitude toward the Atlantic world. Post exemplified a certain engagement with Europe's exotic world, yet not necessarily or straightforwardly with a "Dutch" "Atlantic" per se. By exploring Post's paintings and trying to understand how they work, this essay also seeks to analyze the broader cultural engagement of the Dutch with the tropical world and to problematize the conceit of a particularly Dutch Atlantic.

8 On the development of the Netherlands into a sort of entrepôt of exotic geography – of words and images describing the non-European world – see Benjamin Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism: Geography, Globalism, and Europe's Early Modern World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

9 Peter C. Sutton, *Dutch and Flemish Seventeenth-Century Paintings: The Harold Samuel Collection* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 159 (emphasis added).

## II Among the Saints and Serpents: Post's "Brilliant" Brazil

Frans Post (1612–1680) ranks among the first European artists to paint America *in* America: he is by most measures the first on-site landscape painter of the New World tropics. In 1636 Post accompanied the incoming Dutch governor, Johan Maurits, to Brazil, where he served the count as court painter for eight years, producing images – paintings, sketches, preparatory drawings – principally of the lay of the land, its natural features, and its built environment. Of his life prior to that voyage nearly nothing is known.<sup>10</sup> Born in Haarlem, he came from a family of artists. His father was a glass painter and may have worked in the miniaturist mode that Post would later assimilate into his own paintings; his older brother, Pieter Post, is considered among the leading architects of the Dutch Golden Age, a master of Baroque classicism, and Pieter may have recommended his younger brother to Nassau. Post's early years in Haarlem also coincided with those of the landscape painters Samuel and Jacob van Ruysdael and of Frans Hals, who painted Post's portrait sometime in the mid-seventeenth century (Figure 10.4); yet there is no indication that he trained with these well-known artists.<sup>11</sup> Post, in all events, was a gifted draftsman who produced several superb sketches both en route to and during his Brazilian sojourn, and these later served as models for engraved prints that would appear in the quasi-official history of Nassau's tenure in America, the *Rerum per octennium in Brasilia*, published in 1647.<sup>12</sup> Post made further Brazilian sketches for his own use – none of these remain – and these along with his "official" drawings provided a font of imagery for the artist when he returned to the Netherlands in 1644 and

10 For the most up-to-date biographical data pertaining to Post's life and career, see Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 20–49. Standard biographies and surveys of the painter's oeuvre include Joaquim de Sousa Leão, *Frans Post, 1612–1680* (Amsterdam: A.L. van Gendt, 1973); R. Joppien "The Dutch Vision of Brazil: Johan Maurits and his Artists," in *Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen 1604–1679: A Humanist Prince in Europe and Brazil*, ed. Ernst van den Boogaart (The Hague: The Johan Maurits van Nassau Stichting, 1979), 297–376; and Thomas Kellein and Urs-Beat Frei, *Frans Post, 1612–1680* (Basel: Kunsthalle Basel, 1990).

11 Frans Hals, *Portrait of Frans Jansz. Post*, circa 1655, oil on panel, (27.5 × 23 cm), Worcester Art Museum.

12 Caspar Barlaeus, *Rerum per octennium in Brasilia* (Amsterdam, 1647). Post also prepared images for prints on maps and for the natural history work of Willem Piso et al., *Historia naturalis Brasiliae* (Leiden, 1648). A more full accounting of Post's images and their after-life can be found in P.J.P. Whitehead and M. Boeseman, *A portrait of Dutch 17th century Brazil: Animals, plants and people by the artists of Johan Maurits of Nassau* (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company, 1989).



FIGURE 10.4 *Frans Hals, Portrait of Frans Jansz. Post, circa 1655, oil on panel (27.5 × 23 cm), Worcester Art Museum.*

turned to landscape painting, specializing in the sort of exotic landscape – “exotiscapes” we might call them – with which he has come to be associated.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Pedro and Bia Corrêa do Lago point out that the extant drawings that do *not* correlate to prints (which they catalogue as D-55 to D-59) would most likely be finished drawings

The second act in Post's career veered in a significantly new direction. Having painted and sketched for the prince, he now produced for the market; he shifted, that is, from making site-specific paintings and prints for a patron to painting for profit. Absent in this transformation was any sense that he needed to paint for *patria* – to create patriotic images for a Dutch clientele that may have harbored nostalgia for Brazil – and Post's landscapes over this period (roughly the late 1640s through the late 1650s) pivot from not particularly, yet still vaguely, Dutch presentations of colonial Brazil to far more indeterminate and generic forms of exotic landscape. Indeed, as the years progressed, Post's compositions showed less and less fidelity to any actual scenes he may have observed and recorded in Brazil, as they began to offer more and more by way of the vividly tropical imagery that would soon secure his reputation. And Post's reputation – to judge from the evidence of his expanding output – blossomed in these years based on his ability to paint verdant images of tropical America, sometimes with scenes extracted from the towns and villages of Northern Brazil (where the Dutch had briefly colonized) but more often with the flourishing flora and fauna of the tropics, which typically spilled out of the paintings' thick *repoussoirs*. If in the so-called second phase there remains some correlation, presumably, to earlier-made sketches, by the 1660s if not earlier (the so-called third phase) Post's settings become altogether more freely composed – they decidedly do *not* accord with known perspectives and *vedute* in Brazil – as the paintings take on a richer, looser, more fantastic aspect.<sup>14</sup> During this period, the most prolific and successful of his career, Post also develops the form – or better, the formula – that would distinguish his most characteristic paintings. Deep blue skies dusted with lazy white clouds occupy the upper half of the paintings and top thinly-painted distant

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made from now lost sketches done in situ, a variant of the "clean copy" drawings Post did for printers: see Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 371–392, especially 389–392. On "exotiscapes," compare the discussion in Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Public Culture* 2, no. 2 (1990): 1–24, where Appadurai coins the term "ethnoscapes."

- 14 My discussion of the artist's phases of production borrows from the schema outlined in Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, yet with two mild distinctions: I would propose a slightly earlier transition to the so-called third phase (perhaps beginning in 1659 and the painting that appears as cat. 44 in *ibid.*). I would also suggest that the distinction between the so-called third and fourth phases is less thematic (as is argued by Corrêa do Lago) than a matter of age and declining painterly skill. What is useful, in all events, is to distinguish between the period in Brazil and just after, on the one hand, and the height of production and success from around 1660 to the mid-1670s, on the other hand, when Post produces his most characteristic paintings.

backgrounds; some manner of man-made structure, very often religious in form and animated by briskly painted *staffage*, fills the middle grounds of the compositions; and dense renditions of Brazilian plants and animals, creeping along the very edges of the lower panel, make up the carefully painted foregrounds. Post did some dozen or so landscapes in this mode that are generally dated to the first half of the 1660s – the Rijksmuseum’s generously proportioned *View of Olinda* follows this schema (see Figure 10.3). And he painted another half dozen of such works in the most productive years of his career, spanning the mid-1660s, when Post would have established his distinctive market niche. The 1662 *View of Olinda* is justly ranked among the artist’s most “brilliant” canvases, and it derives from what is generally perceived to be the most outstanding chapter of his career, the “most brilliant period of Post’s output.”<sup>15</sup>

This recent assessment partly rehabilitates Post’s reputation – what meager attention the artist attracted from twentieth-century critics mostly pigeon-holed him as a “curious” painter of Dutch Brazil – yet also provokes further questions and interventions.<sup>16</sup> Frans Post has long been considered a unique and even an idiosyncratic painter – one of but two who journeyed to Brazil (the other being Albert Eckhout) or, for that matter, to any far-flung outpost of the exotic world. Yet there were in truth several other Dutch artists, also scattered in distant pockets of the globe, who were able to imagine and to visually represent distant lands: Gillis and Bonaventura Peeters, who painted the West Indies (earlier than Post, yet without actually voyaging there); Dirk Valkenburg, commissioned by Jonas Witsen to reproduce the lay of the land in Suriname (in this case, after Post); Gerard van Edema, who painted that urban jungle presently known as New York (thus chiefly for British patrons); Reinier “Zeeman” Nooms, who executed North African land and seascapes; Andries Beeckman, who composed meticulous East Indian scenes; Ludolf Backhuysen, also a painter of the East Indies; Willem Schellinks, who produced fantastic images of the Mughal court; Cornelis de Bruyn, who sketched and painted his way across the Ottoman, Persian, and Russian empires; and so on. (The complete list would include at least another dozen accomplished painters, including the

15 Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 200, 290.

16 Serious scholarship on Post, up until the work of the Pedro and Bia Corrêa do Lago, is both slight and uneven. The main monographs are by Erik Larsen, *Frans Post: interprète du Brésil* (Amsterdam: Colibris Editora, 1962) and Sousa-Leão (see note 10 above), the former’s work somewhat speculative in its analysis, the latter’s more of a reconnaissance of the then known paintings. Both – which long held sway in the field – have been superseded by Corrêa do Lago, *Post*.



recently identified Pieter de Wit.)<sup>17</sup> Post, however, gets singled out. He is distinguished by critics and historians not only for painting the non-European world – again, one of many contemporary artists to do so – but also for his “nostalgic” reminiscences of colonial Brazil; for his visual homages to the tenure of his patron Johan Maurits; and, above all, for his patriotic evocations of the Dutch Atlantic empire. “Post’s [...] paintings,” remarked Peter Sutton, who has been largely responsible for placing the artist’s oeuvre in the canon of Dutch Golden Age painting (and serves as the go-to scholar for newly catalogued Post works) “can be seen in one sense as compensation for loss and a reassertion of the global reach of the Dutch trading empire.”<sup>18</sup> His pictures offer “nostalgic reminders” of the Dutch settlements in Brazil and, by extension, of the colonial attainments of the Netherlands in the early modern Atlantic.<sup>19</sup> Post’s images are understood to make allusions to Dutch empire – on this the critics are virtually unanimous – which they not only commemorate but also commend. They may be seen “as representations of the lost paradise of the Dutch in Brazil,” according to a recent assessment. “Much of Frans Post’s work...represents an effort to celebrate Brazil,” opines another critic. His paintings are intended “as grand public statements about” Dutch Brazil, visual memorials that appealed to the Dutch “patriotic sense of [their] nation as a world power with a global reach.”<sup>20</sup>

Yet, again, the paintings do not, and they often do exactly the opposite: where earlier compositions by Post may have subtly introduced or perhaps artfully disguised the Dutch in their colonial world, later works fully abnegated the Dutch presence in Brazil and thereby underscore the remarkably quick retreat of the Dutch from their Atlantic “empire.” Sutton offered the first of these comments in an appraisal of a Brazilian pastiche now in the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid (Figure 10.5). The panel, “one of the most

17 The list is only partial, while studies of these artists are virtually nonexistent. For a tentative survey (looking only East), see Marten Jan Bok, “European Artists in the Service of the Dutch East India Company,” in *Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia*, ed. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Michael North, Amsterdam Studies in the Dutch Golden Age (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014).

18 Peter Sutton, online catalogue entry for Frans Post, *The Church of St. Cosmas and St. Damian and The Franciscan Monastery at Igaraçu, Brazil* (Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid): [http://www.museothyssen.org/en/thyssen/ficha\\_obra/1121](http://www.museothyssen.org/en/thyssen/ficha_obra/1121) [accessed 6 February 2014].

19 Rebecca Parker Brienen, “Albert Eckhout and Frans Post: Two Dutch Artists in Colonial Brazil,” in *Brazil: Body and Soul*, ed. Edward J. Sullivan (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2001), 62–74 (quotation on 71).

20 See Alan Chong, “Ruins of the Cathedral of Olinda, Brazil” (catalogue entry), in Peter C. Sutton, *Masters of 17th-century Dutch Landscape Painting* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts,



FIGURE 10.5 *Frans Post, View of Igarapé, Brazil, circa. 1665, oil on panel (42.8 x 58.8 cm), Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, (inventory no CTB.1994.20), Madrid.*

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attractive paintings [Post] produced throughout his third phase” (thus from the mid 1660s), resembles several done by Post during the height of his success, when the artist had hit his compositional stride – and by which time the Dutch, of course, had long departed Brazil.<sup>21</sup> The paintings of these years depicted much of what made Post’s images ostensibly Dutch, including both the man-made structures of the modest settlements of Brazil and the men and women who would have built them: the odd European figure, along with African slaves and indigenous peoples. Yet these paintings also stocked the natural phenomena of South America, which surely was at the heart of their appeal. The Thyssen-Bornemisza panel, titled simply *View of Igarapé* (namely, the village in Pernambuco), centers on a ramshackle, yet still serviceable,

1987), 415; Sutton, *Dutch and Flemish Seventeenth-Century Paintings*, 159; and Sutton, online catalogue entry for Post, *Church of St. Cosmas and St. Damian* (Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza; see note 18 above).

21 Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 228 (cat. 66).

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FIGURE 10.6 *Frans Post, Church with Portico, 1665, oil on canvas (56.2 x 83.5 cm), Detroit Institute of Art (Accession no. 34.188), Detroit.*

Christian church and on another building set further back and loosely-based on the local Franciscan cloister of Saint Anthony; there are a few figures in the foreground, also in front of the church. This duo of indubitably Catholic structures appear in several other compositions of these years, as does the image of the Olinda cathedral, which anchors the Rijksmuseum canvas (dated 1662) and dozens of others painted in a flurry of production that spilled into the early 1670s. Another painting, titled *Church with Portico* and now in the Detroit Institute of Art (signed and dated 1665; Figure 10.6) bears a church fairly reminiscent of the Rijksmuseum's cathedral – both paintings illustrate a distinctly religious structure with an incongruously classicized entrance – while yet another canvas, also signed and dated 1665 (and now in a private collection) has the *form* of the Detroit panel – a house of worship and worshippers center left, with intensive passages of *naturalia* otherwise creeping along the front of the canvas and its sides – with the *structures* of the Madrid painting, which grant the painting its title: *Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian* (see Figure 10.7 and compare Figures 10.5 and 10.6).

Would these houses of unmistakably *Catholic* worship invoke *Dutch* nostalgia? The Detroit canvas (Figure 10.6), which closely replicates the form and style of the Madrid panel (Figure 10.5), offers a good point of comparison and an instructive case study. Both paintings furnish views of churches (a pair in



FIGURE 10.7 *Frans Post, Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian, 1665, oil on canvas* (65 × 83.3 cm), private collection, São Paulo (sale Christie's, London, 1992).

the Madrid painting, one in Detroit), in both cases framed by *repoussoirs* of tropical flora (note the matching date palms on the right) and curious fauna (nearly identical toads and nine-banded armadillos, also to the right). It was the latter, especially – the exotic *naturalia*, painstakingly painted and quixotically presented – that seemed to have excited viewers and driven the market for Post's work. For while the paintings from this period of his career almost invariably incorporate a pale, typically crumbling church or chapel or cloister with some manner of local *staffage*, they invariably boast more concentrated passages of tropical nature, which fill the peripheries of the compositions and creep inevitably toward the center, lending the pictures a powerful undercurrent of the wondrous South American ecosystem. At the height of his powers, Post could render, in exquisite detail, a fascinating world of tropical wildlife: he excelled at conjuring exotic landscapes. In the Detroit canvas, the aforementioned toad (*Bufo* sp.) and armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*) are shadowed, to the right, by a macabre boa constrictor who swallows a bloodied rabbit (*Sylvilagus brasiliensis*) – nature can be vicious in the tropics. Meanwhile, to the left, an ample iguana lingers in front of a slab of stone, a remnant of a

forsaken classical column, which bears the artist's signature and date of composition: "F. Post 1665." The thick jungle flora, which occupies roughly a third of the canvas, is here and there enlivened by brightly painted timacambirés (*Aechmea* sp., *Bromelioideae* subfam.) and other tropical flowers (the Thyssen panel features a conspicuous pineapple: *Ananas cosmosus*); by various palms and spindly cacti; and by numerous other, gorgeously foliated exotic plants.

The dense greens that saturate the paintings' foregrounds would seem to encroach on the whites and ochers of the middle sections and veritably entwine the sides of the stone and plaster buildings. Several of the latter are readily identifiable Catholic structures. The Madrid panel illustrates a variant of the Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian – the *Igreja dos Santos Cosme e Damião*, the oldest church in Brazil, is more plainly delineated in several other paintings; it was an apparent favorite of the artist – and it also portrays an adaptation of the Franciscan cloister of Saint Anthony of Lisbon and the convent of Igaraçu, which, it should be noted, does not in fact neighbor the village church. The convent's structure is transformed in the Detroit painting into the titular "Church with Portico," a wholly imagined, classically proportioned, and more imposing church, into which parade several worshippers: a Portuguese woman, veiled in black; another Portuguese woman, this time draped in a heavy white head covering and offering alms to a Franciscan (or Capuchin) friar; and another, likely Portuguese couple, entering through an arched doorway. A similar procession heads into the Saints Cosmas and Damian church in another 1665 canvas, now in a private collection, where one can just make out the altar painting housed within (Figure 10.7). The church in the Detroit painting also resembles, with its fanciful, overgrown, Renaissance-style portico – an image that suggests the epic struggle of classical architecture and tropical nature in an lushly exotic world – the relatively grander ecclesiastical structure of the Rijksmuseum's *View of Olinda* (Figure 10.3), a "brilliant" composition that dates, like the Detroit and Madrid paintings, from the early-to-mid 1660s.<sup>22</sup> Toad, armadillo, and iguana are here joined by an anteater (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*), just below a pineapple; by a slowly slinking two-toed sloth (*Choloepus didactylus*); and by a happily napping monkey – all of whom are shaded by palms, cacti, papaya trees, and so on. (The painting's carved frame, of contemporary vintage, depicts more exotic *naturalia*, including a ubiquitous serpent.) The church itself, set slightly back and extended horizontally to enhance its dramatic effect, plays a more pivotal role in this imposing canvas, attracting a train of figures that draws the eye up and down the sloping hill.

22 Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 200 (cat. 52).

Once again, a crowd of parishioners mill about the church's entrance: veiled women, broad-hatted men, cassocked friars, and, a bit lower down, African slaves wearing loose-fitting trousers whose bright color provides a sharp contrast with their dark skin. Several more Africans slaves, further in the distance, perform their mundane duties by bearing a woman in a palanquin – Portuguese, one suspects, as was local habit.

All of which makes a basic point: The European figures in these paintings – and, for that matter, most of the Europeans that populate Post's sizeable output from these years – are overwhelmingly Portuguese. The religious buildings depicted are universally Catholic, and they are emphatically in active use. In the Rijksmuseum composition, one can just make out the altarpiece – a cleverly-done painting within a painting – and the veiled figure of a female saint (the Virgin Mary?) whose modesty no doubt served as a model for the female worshippers of the humid coastal villages of Brazil who – so the painter would have us imagine – kept their faith.<sup>23</sup> And this suggests a corollary point: if these canvases do evince nostalgia, it would appear to be for the era of *Portuguese* control of the region; if they celebrate Brazil, they offer a narrative of Iberian Catholic persistence in a strangely exotic world, of the poetic struggle of faith against flora and fauna in the tropics. To be sure, Post painted other types of buildings – sugar mills, for example, which allude to the economic foundations of the European settlements, Dutch and Portuguese alike, and also plantation houses and village scenes. And he painted other figures, too. Indigenous Brazilians and African slaves predominate his work, the odd European figure – if present at all – typically off to the side and sequestered in a palanquin or heavy veil. Yet during the most intensive period of his production – from the early 1660s into the 1670s, when his output was slowed by age – Post painted churches, chapels, cloisters, and other obvious indicators of the Catholic faith; palanquins, manor houses, sugar mills, and other conspicuous signifiers of Portuguese life; and, above all, the florid, exuberant, superabundant *naturalia* of the exotic world. His paintings convey a message pertaining to Europe's experience and expansion in the exotic world and to the efforts by Europeans to sustain themselves in that world – but not, in the end, or in any easily discernible way, to the Dutch in the Atlantic.

23 Which prompts the obvious point that the overwhelming majority of European women in Brazil over this period were Portuguese, as very few Dutch-born women migrated to the colony during its brief existence. For population figures circa 1645, see José Antônio Gonsalves de Mello, *Tempo dos flamengos: influência da ocupação holandesa na vida e na cultura do norte do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1947), 73 (note 122).

### III Production and Consumption: Exoticism for Europeans

The highly questionable Dutchness of these images and their reluctance to broadcast any parochial lesson about the Dutch in the Atlantic is a matter plain from the perspective of production – the paintings and their messages – as well as from the perspective of consumption. Post designed his products not so much for a patron or patria – after 1645 there is no documented evidence that he painted for Johan Maurits<sup>24</sup> – as for the public. He adroitly created his own market niche and, accordingly, met with considerable success. Post produced a lot: his oeuvre encompasses an estimated 300 painted works (about half of which have been identified and catalogued), done over a span of thirty-odd years. Post's paintings sold at higher than average prices: typically, above the average for landscapes and often well above average. And Post's paintings sold consistently throughout his career, the rate of production peaking in the 1660s, which is precisely the period when other forms of Dutch-made exotic geography also took off.<sup>25</sup> His work and its success in the market mirrors in many ways the profitable manufacture of other products made in Dutch ateliers – books, prints, maps, exotic collectibles – for the European market.

To whom did the paintings sell? Tracing buyers of art sold on the open market is notoriously difficult; there is rarely a clear paper trail for this sort of mass-produced painting that extends beyond late nineteenth-century purchases (when national museums entered the art market and documentation improves). But there do exist some well-preserved provenances for Post's corpus, and these offer useful clues. Of the slightly more than 25 percent of Post's 155 catalogued paintings for which we can determine some level of ownership going back to the early modern period (at least to the eighteenth century or, in some cases, to the turn of the nineteenth century), just under

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24 One exceptional early painting, however, may point to possible princely connections. The now destroyed canvas *Sugar Mill* (Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, cat. 29) may have been done for the Stadtholder Frederik Hendrik, according to Sousa-Leão, as early as 1644 – not an impossible scenario, but one for which there is no actual archival evidence. See Sousa Leão, *Frans Post*, 23–26, 96. Another painting, the 1653 *View of Mauritsstad and Recife* (Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, cat. 22), which focuses on the city founded by Nassau, may also suggest a particular patron and purpose. As this composition is the only one of its kind done by Post – a proper cityscape of the Dutch colony painted the year before it was definitively lost to the Portuguese – it serves more logically as the exception that proves the rule: that Post otherwise did not paint Dutch Brazil.

25 Estimates come from Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 21–49; on Dutch-made exotic geography, see Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism*.

90 percent – an overwhelmingly indicative number – sold to *non*-Dutch buyers.<sup>26</sup> Post's paintings scattered across collections throughout Europe, and they also moved among European buyers after their original sale. Moreover, the predominantly French, English, German, Scandinavian, and sometimes Italian owners of these paintings in the early modern period match the French, English, German, and sometimes Italian translations of early modern Dutch-produced volumes of exotic geography (the Scandinavian collectors commonly obtaining German editions of popular works). There is another group of paintings for which there is also a well-defined lineage: 27 works gifted in 1679 by Johan Maurits of Nassau-Siegen to Louis XIV of France. Two-thirds of these paintings were executed by Post in Brazil (seven of this subgroup remain, while the rest are considered lost), yet the final third were purchased on the open market by Nassau's agent; these paintings span the artist's post-Brazil career. All went to the French court, in all events, in the year immediately following the conclusion of the Franco-Dutch War of 1672–1678, a conflict begun with the French invasion of the Netherlands and concluded in a temper that would hardly have suggested a present of putatively "patriotic" paintings from the vanquished – the Dutch, whose military command included, until he retired in the mid-1670s, the former governor of Dutch Brazil himself – to the victors.

One more telling and highly concrete example: a late-career painting bearing the generic title *Village and Chapel with Portico*, a composition that effectively mirrors the church-and-landscape design so popular in the 1660s (Figure 10.8). Done more than a decade after the Detroit *Church with Portico* – thus in the mid-to-late 1670s – Post's later composition reverses the direction of his earlier painted church (it now faces the valley and background hills rather than the viewer) and, at this late stage in the artist's career, lacks the fine detail in the *repoussoir* of his best work. The *Village and Chapel with Portico* sold, however,

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26 It is difficult to offer a wholly precise accounting, yet the provenances listed in the latest literature – above all, those meticulously detailed in Corrêa do Lago, *Post* – offer broadly convincing evidence. Of the circa 150 securely attributed paintings by Post, 28 percent can be traced with some confidence back to owners in the eighteenth century or, in some instances, the early nineteenth century (which in some cases is as far back as such lineages may be tracked, although in other cases may point to uninterrupted aristocratic ownership). Of this securely documented group, above 85 percent belonged to *non*-Dutch owners for a measurable period of time (which is to say, the paintings may also have passed through other hands at some point). And while this sample offers nothing approaching definitive data, it does demonstrate fairly clearly that Post's paintings were possessed in large numbers by early modern owners who would have had a meager sense of nostalgia for *Dutch* Brazil.



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FIGURE 10.8 *Frans Post, Village and Chapel with Portico, circa. 1675, oil on panel (18.2 × 24 cm), collection of Lord Dysart, Ham House, Surrey, England*  
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as soon as it hit the market, and it offers as such an exceedingly rare instance of a documented atelier-to-market sale—namely a non-commissioned-painting transaction recorded within a year or so of the panel's completion. Its consumer, moreover, turns out to be a buyer who hailed from the other military and political rival of the Netherlands in these years, Great Britain. The painting has been inventoried in Ham House, Surrey – acquired by an English aristocrat, in other words – since “between 1677 and 1679.”<sup>27</sup> The latter date was the year of Post's death, by which time his reputation had successfully crossed the channel to England and spread to the court of the Sun King in France. In both Surrey and Versailles, Frans Post was collected and admired: less for his representation of the Dutch in the Atlantic, one may assume, than for his exceptional ability to paint Europe's exotic world.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 326 (cat. 145).

<sup>28</sup> This essay has not delved into Post's drawings, which were an integral part of his work; yet it should be briefly pointed out that these, too, sold largely to non-Dutch patrons. The largest known group of sketches – 30 or so, dating from the artist's formative years in

Also selling in London and Paris – and in the courts and more modest homes of consumers across Europe – were other Dutch products of exotic geography, and these lend an important context to Post's success as a purveyor of exotic imagery and, specifically, of images of the tropical West. For books on America, Europeans could turn to the bulky and lavishly illustrated geography of Arnoldus Montanus, *De nieuwe en onbekende wereld* (1671), an Amsterdam-made volume also translated into English and German. On the Caribbean they could read Charles de Rochefort's *Histoire naturelle et morale des Iles Antilles de l'Amerique* (1658), published first in Rotterdam and then in numerous subsequent editions in Dutch, English, German, and French. And on tropical natural history they could consult the authoritative tome of Willem Piso and Georg Marcgraf, published soon after the return of Johan Maurits from Brazil in 1648 – the volume included considerable graphic work based on drawings by Albert Eckhout – and then reissued in an expanded edition (1658) that also comprised a natural history of the tropical East.<sup>29</sup> For maps they pored over Nicolaes Visscher's highly influential – and relentlessly copied – *Novissima et Accuratissima Totius Americae Descriptio*, with its iconic allegory of America designed by Nicolaes Berchem. And Europeans also consulted the immense cartographic output of the firm of Blaeu and the many other mapmakers who made Amsterdam the capital of cartography in the seventeenth century.<sup>30</sup> And then there were material arts: ceramic wares made in Delft, replicating both the exotic East and West (sometimes on the very same object); marine shells engraved and otherwise decorated with tropical flora and fauna; coconuts carved with images of Indians and palm trees (both Post's and Eckhout's

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Brazil – were obtained in the seventeenth century already by the English collector William Courten (alias Charleton) and subsequently purchased by Hans Sloane, the celebrated British imperialist and founder of the British Museum. Again, the case for these images' distinctly Dutch-patriotic resonances would seem rather weak.

29 Arnoldus Montanus, *De nieuwe en onbekende weereld, of, Beschryving van America en 't zuid-land* (Amsterdam, 1671); Charles de Rochefort, *Histoire naturelle et morale des Iles Antilles de l'Amerique* (Rotterdam, 1658); Piso, *Historia naturalis Brasiliae*; and Willem Piso et al., *De Indiae utriusque re naturali et medica libri quatuordecim* (Amsterdam, 1658).

30 On Visscher's famous map and its equally famous iconography, see the discussion in Benjamin Schmidt, "On the Impulse of Mapping, or How a Flat Earth Theory of Dutch Maps Distorts the Thickness and Pictorial Proclivities of Early Modern Cartography (and Misses Its Picturing Impulse)," *Art History* 35 (2012): 1036–1050. For Dutch-made overseas maps more generally – including those in Joan Blaeu's *Atlas Maior* (Amsterdam, 1662–1672) – see Kees Zandvliet, *Mapping for money: Maps, plans and topographic paintings and their role in Dutch overseas expansion during the 16th and 17th centuries* (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1998).

work was reproduced in this form); tapestries woven with pastiches of imagined American life (again, incorporating motifs of Post and Eckhout); and so on.<sup>31</sup> Not all of this material came from the Netherlands, but a high proportion did, and objects that did not often borrowed motifs from Dutch sources – especially from the paintings, prints, and drawings of Post and Eckhout, which inspired a vast amount of American imagery for years to come. In the production of so many of these objects and sources – the books and artifacts that furnished Europeans with a view of the New World and of the exotic world, more generally – the Dutch played the role of middlemen, entrepreneurs of exoticism and traders in imagery of the world. Post fits into this broader history of cultural commerce: he produced images of the tropics for an evidently enthusiastic audience of European consumers.

The Dutch role as mediators of the non-European world – and of the Atlantic world, in particular – has an extensive history, and it may only be in the last century or so that critics have so missed this point that they have erroneously attached the terms “Dutch” and “Atlantic” to these materials. This is almost certainly the case for the work of Frans Post. He reproduced, as early modern sources could frankly indicate, “the Indies,” sometimes “Brazil,” always Europe’s exotic world of circa 1670 – yet never the “Dutch” or the “Atlantic.” A painting dated right around that time makes this point both in its composition and its reception, the latter recorded in a rare contemporary comment affixed to the back of the painting. A large canvas purchased in 1678 or 1679 by Jacob Cohen, who served as Johan Maurits’ financial agent, the painting made a princely enough impression that Cohen acquired it for the collection of works that would eventually go to Louis XIV. Its exceptional size notwithstanding – the canvas measures only slightly smaller than the Rijksmuseum’s grand *View of Olinda* – the painting follows the basic formula that Post had by this time perfected. Beneath a wide, pale blue, and gently clouded sky, in an opening cleared from the jungle greens, a small group of Indians and Africans gather with baskets and tools; to the rear and barely visible are a few more figures, including a heavily veiled European woman. A thick *repoussoir* along the left side of the canvas and spilling into the foreground features a stately palm and an eye-catching pineapple; cacti and gourds of various shapes and sizes inhabit the dense brush. Perched on a hill in the distance is a single chapel; while in the center and on the right lies a more substantial cluster of buildings that

31 For several excellent examples of such materials, see Ellinoor Bergvelt and Renè Kistemaker, *De wereld binnen handbereik: Nederlandse kunst- en rariteitenverzamelingen, 1585–1735*, 2 vols. (Zwolle and Amsterdam: Waanders and Amsterdam Historisch Museum, 1992).

holds the composition together: a religious compound, toward which the European woman heads – perhaps a convent or cloister – and a decent-sized house, which gives the painting its title: *House of a Portuguese Nobleman*.<sup>32</sup> This title appears in an archival notation, which indicates, without much ambiguity, how the subject of the painting was understood in the late seventeenth century:

At the top of the Mountain stands a chapel of a village, which lies at its foot. A cloister of Capuchin monks of the Franciscan order. The house of a Portuguese nobleman. N.B. The yellow color one sees in the region are the Sugar Cane fields, from where sugar is extracted.

The inclusion of the word "nobleman" makes the painting worthy of its royal collector; the fact that the subject is Portuguese is beyond doubt. Likewise, the notation makes clear the Catholic bent of the composition; and there is notice, as well, of the economic relevance of the landscape (which may have increased the painting's appeal to the king, as France expanded its own sugar plantations, albeit in the Caribbean). In all events, the image conveys nary a sense of the Dutch in the Atlantic, even as it does convey a fairly good sense of the Atlantic in Europe, as the seventeenth century came to a close: of the Atlantic world as perceived and produced by a Dutch artist, to be sure, yet as bartered and collected by European princes. Indeed, in certain ways Post's Atlantic became *the* Atlantic: a picture of the tropical world that would ultimately be exhibited in the most prestigious gallery of Europe – the Musée du Louvre – where the painting remains to this day.

This broad and necessarily cursory glance into the work of Frans Post suggests several conclusions. First and most fundamentally, it proposes a new way to look at the much-admired landscape paintings of Post and hence a revisionist take on their meaning in the market of the late-seventeenth century. Post painted not so much nostalgia as exotica – hardly the same thing – and his works appealed to a generically European audience. A reassessment of Post's painted oeuvre recommends, second, a reevaluation of the wider cultural production related to Post, whose images spun off into prints, maps, tapestries, ceramics, and a full range of decorative arts. These Post-inflected products should be understood in the context of exotic geography circa 1700; they speak

32 Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 287 (cat. 111), where the painting is assigned to the late 1660s (ca. 1670) and titled *House of a Portuguese Nobleman*. The Louvre, which dates the painting ca. 1650–1655, takes a broader perspective in their labeling: *A Monastery of the Capuchin Fathers [...] The House of a Portuguese Nobleman*.

not so much to the Dutch place in the Atlantic as to the Dutch role in purveying *images* of the Atlantic in various texts, pictures, and objects. More generally, the pattern of production and consumption sketched out for Post's paintings relates to the pattern of production and consumption for a far wider range of goods: of paintings by other artists, of course, yet also of books, prints, maps, curiosities, and material arts that engaged with early modern Europe's rapidly expanding world. And this brings up a third and final point pertaining to the putative Dutch Atlantic, of which Post's work has long been claimed as an exemplary cultural expression. Post's paintings are certainly Dutch in terms of their form and production – he indubitably borrowed techniques from the early modern landscape tradition of the Netherlands – yet hardly in terms of their content and consumption; they were broadly European in their market and meaning. And while they also reflect the space of the Atlantic world – the flora and fauna, the indigenous peoples and African slaves, the plantation economy and colonial rule – they flowed easily into a vaster European engagement with and narrative about the exotic world. In truth, Post seemed to go out of his way to *efface* the Dutch presence in Brazil, to compose paintings that disguised Dutch history in the Atlantic: rare is the Post composition with identifiable Dutch figures or settlements, with allusions to the Dutch West India Company or the reign of Nassau.<sup>33</sup> His work sold, accordingly, among a wide spectrum of European collectors and connoisseurs and those otherwise interested in the lush exotic world. In this sense, Post was a classic Dutch entrepreneur – a middleman who identified a market niche, a merchant of cultural goods who traded in images of the tropics. As often was the case in the early modern period – as was the case, as well, with other global products trafficked in this period – the Dutch played the role of go-betweens: in terms of trade and in terms of culture. Post exemplifies these early modern Dutch instincts and patterns. His work allows us to see more clearly, in dazzling compositions and luxuriantly verdant detail, how *Europe* engaged with the exotic world and how vital the Dutch connection was to this process.

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33 This is a point made succinctly by Pedro and Bia Corrêa do Lago, as they write in their catalogue entry for *View of Mauritsstad and Recife*: "Why was Olinda portrayed so many times, and Mauritsstad and Recife only this once?" (Corrêa do Lago, *Post*, 146).

## SECTION 4

### *Shifting Encounters*





# The Eighteenth-Century Danish, Dutch, and Swedish Free Ports in the Northeastern Caribbean

## *Continuity and Change*

*Han Jordaán and Victor Wilson*

### Introduction

The focus of this article are the Dutch colony of St. Eustatius (Statia), the Danish colony of St. Thomas and the Swedish colony of St. Barthélemy, during the close of the so-called “long eighteenth century.” These colonies shared the distinction of being free ports. The last two decades of the eighteenth century were a tumultuous time on both sides of the Atlantic, and, in the case of free ports, a time of both economic success as well as misfortune and ruin. Free ports thrived – albeit under great risk – on the fringes of empires in conflict, offering neutral, intercolonial transit stations during times when regular ports on critical trade routes were obstructed or blockaded.

The Dutch Republic managed to remain neutral during most of the eighteenth century, but this neutrality ended abruptly with the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780–1784). One of the causes of the war was the Dutch stance in the War of American Independence (1775–1783). St. Eustatius, which fulfilled a crucial role in providing the Americans with goods, arms, and ammunition was a first target for British military action. After a devastating British occupation in 1781, which ended when allied French forces retook the island that same year, the Statian merchants and planters rebuilt their position and returned to business as usual. But in 1793, the Dutch again became involved in armed conflict when revolutionary France declared war on Great Britain and the Dutch Republic. Two years later, French troops invaded the Dutch Republic. The Stadtholder fled to England and the Batavian Republic was proclaimed, which became a vassal state of France. That very same year, St. Eustatius was occupied by “friendly” French forces sent from Guadeloupe – an occupation which would spell the definitive end to its role as a free port in the region. By the beginning of 1795, Statia had lost its unique position as a free port in the region. Its role was taken over by St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy. Danish St. Thomas had had a long history of free trade beginning in the early decades of the eighteenth century, while the new Swedish colony of St. Barthélemy had declared its port open to all nations in 1784. The economic development of these two colonies, which managed to remain neutral during the last decade of the



eighteenth century, benefited greatly from the downfall of Statia and the other assorted international conflicts around the turn of the century.

These colonies have, for a number of reasons, not been researched extensively from either a regional or Atlantic perspective. Little or no attention has been made to connections across imperial borders in the colonies themselves, either in the form of migration flows, the transfer of ideas and information, or the complex networks created through trade and commerce. It follows that the relationship between the different free ports of the Caribbean and the surrounding colonies in the region is not very clearly understood.

This chapter will elaborate on David Armitage's concept of "cis-Atlantic" history, in the sense of being a regional history within an Atlantic context. More specifically, it will study three places within the Caribbean region with a similar institution – the free port city – and their inhabitants. The focus will be mainly on the transfer of ideas, commercial networks and migration. Firstly, it is argued that the experience of Dutch transit trade informed and influenced Danish and Swedish colonial policy to a considerable extent. Secondly, it is argued that the commercial networks were operated similarly and had contacts in all three free ports, due to their proximity to each other as well as to the existing regional systems of trade. Also, it is argued that their similar roles during the end of the eighteenth century gave rise to competition and affected contemporary discussions on trade policies in both colony and metropole. Lastly, it is argued that the occupation of the Dutch colonies gave rise to migration flows that deeply affected the development of St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy well into the nineteenth century, and that migration from colonies such as Statia ensured a continuity of trade in the region.

### **The Historical Background of St. Eustatius, St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy**

The island of St. Eustatius was occupied by the Dutch in 1636. This was not done by the Dutch West India Company (WIC), but by an expedition financed by a number of Zeeland merchants who had obtained official permission for this enterprise from both the Zeeland chamber and the Board of Directors of the Company. Statia became a so-called *patroonschap*, a privately administered colony within the jurisdiction of the WIC. The island was uninhabited at the time of the Dutch arrival and was initially baptized New Zeeland. It was intended to become an plantation colony and the first settlers cultivated tobacco. But in 1683 the last heir of the original *patroons* sold his share to the WIC and St. Eustatius came under the direct government of the Company,

which recognized the island's potential to become a regional center for illicit trade.<sup>1</sup> During the wars of the second half of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century in which the Dutch Republic was involved, Statia was recurrently seized and plundered by the French and the English.<sup>2</sup>

After the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War Statia was returned to the Dutch. The WIC resumed control but in 1791 this organization went bankrupt and was dissolved. The administration of the colonies then returned to the States General. In 1795, after the Batavian Republic was proclaimed, all three Dutch Windward islands<sup>3</sup> were placed under French "protection" by Commissioner Victor Hugues at Guadeloupe. Between 1801 and 1802 and again from 1810 until 1816 the British were in control again.<sup>4</sup>

The Scandinavian kingdoms were comparatively late entrants in the scramble for colonies in the Caribbean. The first Danish occupation of St. Thomas occurred in 1671, followed decades later by the colonization of neighboring St. John in 1717. With the purchase of St. Croix from the French in 1733, the Danish Caribbean empire was completed. The same year as the Danes gained a foothold on St. Thomas, the Danish West India Company was established both as a commercial and an administrative entity for the island. Reorganized as the Danish West India and Guinea Company in 1680, the Company assumed administration of all the colonies in the Caribbean as well as the Danish enclaves on the Gold Coast until it was dissolved in 1754. While early Danish dominion over their islands was questioned and challenged from the first day of their colonization by other European powers, the islands remained in Danish hands, except for two British occupations in the early nineteenth century, one in 1801–1802 and the other 1807–1815. The islands were finally sold a century later to the United States, in 1917.<sup>5</sup>

The first successful Swedish claim for a colonial territory in the region came at a much later date than did the Danish acquisitions in the Caribbean. While the ambition to establish colonies certainly was not lacking among members of the Swedish government, the practical outcomes of such projects during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were limited. The seventeenth century

1 G.J. van Grol, *De grondpolitiek in het West-Indisch domein, I, Algemeen historische inleiding*, 3 vols., (Amsterdam: S. Emmering, 1934), 1:46–48, 56.

2 Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches: Dutch trade in the Caribbean, 1648–1795* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1998), 89.

3 The islands in the Northeastern Caribbean which are called "Leeward" in English are termed "Bovenwinds" or "Windward" in Dutch.

4 Van Grol, *Grondpolitiek*, 1:65–68.

5 Neville A.T. Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St. Thomas, St. John & St. Croix* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 6–7; Svend-Erik Green-Pedersen and P.C. Willemoes Jørgensen, "Dansk kolonihistorie – det globale perspektiv," in *Dansk kolonihistorie: Indføring og studier*, ed. Peter Hoxcer Jensen et al (Aarhus: Forlaget Historia, 1983), 9–15.

New Sweden settlement in Delaware rapidly fell into the hands of Dutch colonists. Sweden also made attempts to trade on the African Coast but could not keep a foothold there either, as they were unable to compete with larger powers. The eighteenth century was marked by Swedish territorial losses around the Baltic Sea, effectively ending the preceding period of imperial expansion. The same century also saw some more or less serious attempts at colonial acquisition. The culmination of diplomatic negotiations with France during and after the American War of Independence would yield the only tangible result of these ambitions. In addition to a treaty that stipulated French subsidies to the Swedish crown, the French ceded the small Caribbean island of St. Barthélemy in exchange for staple rights in Gothenburg. The Swedish rule of St. Barthélemy was interrupted by a British occupation in 1801–1802, during the same period as the Danish islands.<sup>6</sup>

The islands of St. Eustatius, St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy had, at the close of the eighteenth century, developed into small polyglot communities which were centered on trade in shoreline urban settlements. These maritime societies were composed of a variety of different ethnic groups, religions and languages. At the time of the British capture of Statia in 1781, the majority of the white population was male: adult males outnumbered adult females three to one, with 668 men (75 percent) versus 215 women (25 percent). Of 163 persons, 20 percent of the adult white male population, it is known that they settled in the colony only within half a year prior to the arrival of the British. Over 60 percent of these newly arrived burghers came from Europe, mainly from England, Ireland and Scotland, but also from France, and Italian and German territories. The remaining 40 percent came from other, mainly British, colonies, especially from Bermuda and North America. There was only a small core of long-term residents; the majority of the white population consisted of recent migrants, predominantly unmarried white males of British descent, who had come to the island to participate in trade and probably hoping to make a fortune on the “Golden Rock,” as Statia was known.<sup>7</sup>

On St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy, foreigners were of central importance as well. The local administrative elite, the colonial officials, civil servants, clergy

6 Sture M. Waller, “Det svenska förvärvet av St. Barthélemy. Huvuddragen av de svensk-franska förhandlingarna,” *Historisk tidskrift*, 3 (1953): 231–255; Sten Carlsson, *Svensk historia 2: tiden efter 1718* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1980), 177; Elisabeth Mansén, *Sveriges historia 1721–1830* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 2011), 79–84.

7 Norman Barka, “Citizens of St. Eustatius, 1781,” in *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of Expansion*, ed. Robert L. Paquette and Stanley L. Engerman (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 223–238, 230, 232, 234–236.

and soldiers consisted of Danes and Swedes. The cadres of planters, merchants, artisans and workers were, as a rule, mainly foreigners. During the initial phase of Danish settlement in St. Thomas, attempts at colonization using indentured farmers and peasants failed. Instead, the only recourse was a more permissive policy to ensure colonization and development. Between the years 1685–1693, the island was leased to the Prussian Brandenburger Company in order to revitalize the colony.<sup>8</sup> A large share of the Company actors were of Dutch origin, and when the Company ceased its operations, the Dutch were the most prominent group and would remain so for the rest of the eighteenth century. By the time of the first documented censuses in St. Thomas in 1686 and 1688, the Dutch comprised a significant portion of the population. In 1686, they numbered 37 out of a total of 135 white adults, and in 1688 they totalled 66 out of a total of 148.<sup>9</sup> The Dutch cultural and commercial dominance on St. Thomas and St. John is illustrated by other indicators as well. The Dutch Reformed Church became firmly established in the Danish colonies and a majority of the slaves spoke a Dutch Creole.<sup>10</sup> The system of open admission continued after the purchase of St. Croix in 1733. The island's topography was suitable for plantation agriculture in a way that neither St. Thomas or St. John were. To attract planter knowledge and expertise, Danish officials offered cheap lots of land, generous loans and a tax-free status to planters from nearby islands from 1735 and onwards. Migrants came from Antigua, St. Kitts, and Virgin Gorda, and even from islands as far away as Barbados. The English comprised the most numerous and influential cohort of colonists at the beginning of Danish development of St. Croix. A number of Dutch settlers also arrived from St. Eustatius, who under the leadership of Governor Pieter Heyliger, sought refuge in St. Croix during the War of Jenkins' Ear in 1739. In this way, the English language and culture became dominant on St. Croix whereas the Dutch dominated St. Thomas and St. John.<sup>11</sup>

8 Hall, *Slave Society*, 6–7.

9 Valdemar Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies under Company Rule 1671–1754* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1917), 121; J.O. Bro-Jørgensen, *Dansk Vestindien indtil 1755: kolonisation og kompanistyre* (København: Fremad, 1966), 170–171.

10 For the correspondence of the authorities of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Dutch Republic with the local churches in the three Danish islands, see Amsterdam Municipal Archives (hereafter SAA), 379 (Archive of the Classis Amsterdam of the Dutch Reformed Church), inv. nos. 227–228. Online inventory: <https://stadsarchief.amsterdam.nl/archieven/archiefbank/inventaris/379.nl.html> (2014).

11 Hall, *Slave Society*, 9–13; Jens Vibaek, *Dansk Vestindien 1755–1848: Vestindiens storhetstid* (København: Fremad, 1966), 55–62.

In the case of St. Barthélemy after Swedish acquisition, colonization by Swedes was not even seriously considered. At the time of the transition from French to Swedish governance, a local population of 700 French farmer settlers and their slaves were already using most of the land on the island for subsistence farming. Small quantities of cotton were a locally-produced staple, but there was nothing that generated incomes on par with regional slave plantation economies. In 1786, Swedish ownership of the new colony had become common knowledge on both sides of the Baltic Sea. Facing famine as a result of crop failures that had stricken the Baltic countries during the preceding years, farmers and tenants within the Finnish provinces petitioned to move to the king's new colony in the Americas, where it was said one could make a fortune easily. Faced with this plea, King Gustav III thought it best to dispel any false rumors that the colony was a bountiful land of opportunity. Instead, measures were adopted that were aimed to attract merchants and capital from the surrounding islands, to make the most out of an acquisition of questionable value.<sup>12</sup>

### Ideology of the Free Ports

The economic history of the six islands of the Dutch Antilles – from their colonization during the seventeenth century until 1795 – constitutes a conspicuous counterpoint to that of the British and French Caribbean. Because of their limited size, and unsuitability for large-scale agriculture, different strategies had to be employed in order to create profitable colonies out of the Dutch islands.<sup>13</sup> Very much the same case can be made for the Scandinavian islands in the region, with the only exception being St. Croix, which became a full-fledged plantation colony. Also, as will be argued in this section, the administration of St. Barthélemy and St. Thomas were influenced to a significant extent by Dutch practice in the region.

The colonial system was, in a strict sense, built on mercantilist principles which held that colonial markets were only within the exclusive trading rights of the home country. Shipping to and from the colonies was barred to foreign

12 Birger Wedberg, "S. Barthélemy-febern," in *Tärningskast om liv och död. Rättshistoriska skisser* (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt & Söner, 1935), 51–62; Pekka Masonen, "Kustavilainen siirtomaapolitiikka ja Saint-Barthélemyyn kuume," *Historiallinen aikakauskirja* 3 (2007): 330–345.

13 P.C. Emmer, "‘Jesus Christ was Good, but Trade Was Better’ An Overview of the Transit Trade of the Dutch Antilles, 1634–1795," in *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion*, ed. Robert L. Paquette and Stanley L. Engerman, 450–475.

vessels. These regulations became the object of discussion and criticism, both in the metropolises and in the colonies, especially after the publication in 1776 of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, which led to serious questioning of mercantilist policies. During times of crisis and conflict, regular supplies from the metropole to the colonies simply could not be sustained, and the recurrent wars between Great Britain and France closed regular traffic which was the lifeline of plantation colonies. The colonies needed continual provisions, victuals and slaves, without which they would be sure to suffer losses and possibly face food crises and famine. The establishment of free ports was one solution that facilitated shipping between traders of all nationalities. The system had its beginnings in the fourteenth-century Mediterranean port cities and was later implemented in various localities on the other side of the Atlantic. The Dutch were one of the progenitors of the system in the Caribbean. They conducted this trade with the Spanish colonies through Willemstad on Curaçao, and with the French, the English and the Americans through St. Eustatius.<sup>14</sup>

On St. Eustatius tobacco was soon replaced by sugar cane. However, it already became clear in the 1660s that the island was far more valuable as a market for illicit trade with the surrounding English and French colonies. Until the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, economic success was severely hampered by the recurrent wars and foreign occupations. In the 1720s, the economic situation improved and, thanks to the fact that the Dutch Republic managed to remain neutral during most European conflicts, the economic situation improved up until the 1780s. While nearly all the other European nations were at war – between 1739 when the War of Jenkins' Ear broke out and 1763, when the Seven Years' War came to an end, a whole series of armed conflicts was fought by the major colonial powers both in Europe and the Americas – the Statian position as a neutral entrepôt gained importance. The colonies of the belligerents, when cut off from regular connections with the home country, obtained supplies from neutral Statia, which were paid for with tropical produce. By the 1750s, the island had become a principal regional market, where European goods, African slaves, and American colonial produce were exchanged.<sup>15</sup> Ships of all nations were allowed to trade on the island. But although ships from foreign European ports were admitted, the traffic with the Dutch Republic was exclusively reserved for Dutch Ships. After the outbreak of the American War of Independence, Statia's role as an Atlantic trading hub reached its zenith and the island became a major supplier for the rebellious North Americans. The Statian heyday ended abruptly with the British occupation of 1781. After the de facto French occupation between 1795 and 1801

14 Klooster, *Illicit Riches*, 91–94.

15 Ibid., 89–92.

and the two British occupations that followed during the early nineteenth century, the role of St. Eustatius as an Atlantic entrepôt definitely came to an end. The loss of Dutch neutrality in European conflicts and the waning mercantilist doctrine were, as will be explained later, the principal reasons why.

The Danish plan for a free port was an idea born out of necessity. Up until the year 1754 the Danish colonies had been controlled by the Danish West India Company, which, by the end of its administration, struggled against local planter interests and uneven profits. Indeed, difficulties arising from supplying the colonies and the planters' needs resulted in limited free trade concessions as early as 1707. Shipping rights in the colonies were liberally extended, insofar as colonial shipowners were permitted to export locally produced staples to any foreign port. Danish home ports, including Hamburg and Bremen, were forbidden destinations. In principle, this entailed that the Danish colonies became a Caribbean free trade zone from 1724 to 1745. Company attempts at reasserting its monopoly after that period failed, and the colonies were declared the property of the crown after the dissolution of the Company. Under crown rule, free trade was reinstated for both St. Thomas and St. John, which was finalized by a royal decree in 1764, which held that St. Thomas and St. John were open to ships bearing flags of all nations. Danish colonial goods would, however, be reserved exclusively for Danish keels. Meanwhile, St. Croix remained closed to foreign traffic, the important exceptions being slave vessels and the victuals and necessities that were regularly supplied from North America. The 1764 decree was, in essence, a concession to St. Thomas and St. John, both of which had been marginalized by the burgeoning plantation economy of St. Croix. The fact that the commerce of St. Thomas floundered during peacetime was also acknowledged by this decision. It was thought that by establishing this economic dualism between the islands, the exception made to St. Thomas and St. John would compensate for their relative disadvantages.<sup>16</sup>

In Sweden, it was Gustav III's finance minister, Johan Liljencrantz, who was the leading proponent of free port and transit trade ideas. Liljencrantz is

16 Poul Erik Olsen, *Toldvaesendet i Dansk Vestindien 1672–1917* (København: Toldhistorisk Selskab, 1988), 33, 61, 147; Erik Gøbel, "Management of the Port of Saint Thomas, Danish West Indies, during the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *The Northern Mariner/Le Marin du Nord* 7, no. 4 (1997): 45–63; Erik Gøbel, "Volume and Structure of Danish Shipping to the Caribbean and Guinea, 1671–1838," *International Journal of Maritime History* 2, no. 2 (1990): 109–114; Vibæk, *Dansk Vestindien 1755–1848*, 64, 81–83. The majority of free port traffic in the Danish colonies would gravitate towards St. Thomas instead of St. John, as Charlotte Amalie was preferable to Coral Bay in St. John as an anchorage.

usually accredited with the decision for the establishment of a free port on St. Barthélemy. A pragmatic mercantilist, Liljencrantz favored the idea of establishing Sweden as the middleman between Northern Europe and the markets outside of the Baltic. While the earlier Baltic experiments in free trade certainly played their role in the Swedish considerations regarding St. Barthélemy, local examples in the Caribbean were clearly studied. The first expedition and survey ship to the island carried with it two merchants, Jacob E. Röhl and A.F. Hansen. The former, upon return to Sweden in late 1785, penned a sobering report on the limited future use of the colony. The only prospect, according to Röhl, was through freedom of trade with neighboring colonies, especially the sugar-producing French colonies of Guadeloupe and Martinique. This would have to be accomplished either by formal trade rights or by smuggling. It is clear that he had conversed with Statians on the latter subject, as he related their methods of clandestine trade, and that the Dutch “understood to procure so-called indulgence for their swindles in the French Islands, although they must pay for it without exception.” Röhl referenced the Dutch system on St. Eustatius as a way of ensuring a “popular government.”<sup>17</sup> The important fact about Röhl’s document is that it is striking in its similarity to the decrees issued on 31 October 1786, the same decrees that established the Swedish West India Company (SWIC) and created the first regulations for the colony’s administration. The Company was created as a joint stock venture with a limited charter, and awarded the right to trade with St. Barthélemy and other West Indian islands and North America for an initial period of fifteen years. Its privileged position in the form of lower duties and shares in the income of the colony did not, however, give the company exclusive trading rights. Any Swede or foreigner was allowed to carry on trade with St. Barthélemy, although with certain limitations.<sup>18</sup>

By this time, the decision to establish St. Barthélemy as a free port had already been made, and was officially proclaimed in 1785. The free port model practiced by the Dutch and Danish was seen as the only realistic alternative when the future of the colony was debated by the government. The process of applying a Swedish governing structure at the island was also influenced by actors already engaged in the transit trade of the Caribbean. In 1784 Henrich Wilmans,<sup>19</sup> a Bremen merchant with 16 years of experience trading in both St. Eustatius and St. Thomas,

17 J.E. Röhl, *Wördsamt Memorial*, 14 January 1786, F16, Vitterhetsakademiens handskriftsamling, Antikvarisk-topografiska arkivet (ATA).

18 These decrees and others are published in J.B. Hattendorf, *Saint Barthélemy and the Swedish West India Company. A selection of printed documents, 1784–1814* (Delmar: Scholars’ facsimiles & reprints, 1994).

19 In all likelihood, identical with the merchant established in Statia by 1788, see below.



petitioned the Swedish king with suggestions about the possible utility of a new free port at St. Barthélemy. Wilmans detailed the legal and administrative institutions in existence on Statia, and was of the opinion that the Swedes would be wise to implement them in their new colony. He was also adamant that customs duties would have to be fixed at a consistently lower rate than on St. Thomas and St. Eustatius in order to succeed economically. This might seem a peculiar suggestion from Wilmans, who at the time was co-owner of a merchant house on St. Thomas. But he himself explained that another competitor in the region would “be attended with great benefit to us in St. Thomas, as the Danes must do the same to retain merchants among them.” The information and suggestions that Wilmans provided were subjects of great interest, and resulted in some visible adaptations in the 1786 decrees, among which was the institution of a mixed council of Swedish officials and local inhabitants.<sup>20</sup>

With the acquisition of St. Barthélemy, Sweden also acquired the status of a slaving power, though on a limited scale. In principle the colony was a Swedish territory and in all respects under the rule of the Swedish law of 1734. At the same time, the emerging legal structure of the fledgling colony came to adopt a mixed legal system incorporating previous French laws and West Indian customs, much in the same way as they were in Dutch and Danish colonies. In other words, Swedish administration of the newly acquired colony was quite firmly anchored in local and regional conditions, and the Dutch example of St. Eustatius was a clear reference point.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Islands' Merchant and Mariner Communities: Composition, Networks, Operations**

The Statian community of merchants and mariners consisted of a minority of members of local families, some of whom had already lived on the island for several generations, and an international group of Dutch and numerous

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20 Wilmans received a gold medal from the Swedish king as a token of gratitude, but then was not allowed to begin construction of a planned house in Le Carénage on St. Barthélemy as he had expressly wished for. P.M. of Henrich Wilmans, dated 18 October 1784, Henrich Wilmans – Creutz, 24 May 1785, both in SBS 1A, SNA; Ingegerd Hildebrand, *Den svenska kolonin St Barthélemy och Västindiska kompaniet fram till 1796* (Lund: Smålandspostens boktryckeri, 1951) 87–93.

21 Fredrik Thomasson, “Contre la Loi mais en considérant les Circonstances dangereuses du moment.” The Swedish court of law on Saint Barthélemy around 1800,” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Caribbean Historians, Curaçao, May 2012), 6–12.

foreign expatriates. A special group among these expatriate merchants and mariners was formed by Bermudians. One of its most prominent representatives, as we will see, was Richard Downing Jennings. Due to overcrowding, Bermudians quickly departed for other American destinations. Migrants from this British Atlantic colony settled in the mainland North American colonies, the Bahamas, St. Thomas, and St. Eustatius, operating trading networks of their own along kinship ties. There were also strong Bermudian-Dutch connections. The Statian family of Huguenot descent, Godet, with contacts in Guadeloupe, St. Barthélemy, Boston, and Amsterdam, was related to the Bermudian Gilbert family, which was part of an extensive Anglo-American network, and also to former governor and prominent Statian merchant Johannes de Graaff. In 1780, Bermudians made up the largest group of British colonial settlers in Statia, outnumbering all those from the Caribbean and North America combined.<sup>22</sup>

In 1789 the population structure of the white inhabitants seems to have been more balanced than before the war, which might indicate that the number of “fortune seekers” relative to more stable settlers had diminished. There were 787 men aged 16 years or older versus 771 women. Boys and girls younger than 16 years numbered 374 and 409 respectively.<sup>23</sup> Governor Godin estimated in 1790 that about 1000 men, women and children depended directly on commerce for their livelihood, while some 300 earned a living as mariners or fishermen.<sup>24</sup> The international composition of the Statian community can be seen in two petitions dating from March 1787, which bore, respectively, the names of 68 and 116 inhabitants of various backgrounds, who had an interest in trade and shipping.<sup>25</sup> In a statement regarding Statian trade, issued in July of that same year by the aforementioned Bermudian Richard Downing Jennings and two other foreign merchants, it is mentioned that he represented 52 non-Dutch residents on the island.<sup>26</sup>

The foreign community in 1790 consisted mainly of British, North American, and French merchants. According to Godin, there were two large British companies. These had many ships in service, and were mainly interested in the

22 Michael J. Jarvis, *In the Eye Of All Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680–1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 4–5, 354–355.

23 National Archives of the Netherlands, The Hague (hereafter NL-HaNA), 1.05.01.02, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie (NWIC) inv. no. 1196, 628.

24 J. de Hullu, “St. Eustatius, St. Maarten en Saba op het laatst van de 18<sup>de</sup> eeuw,” *West-Indische Gids* 1, no. 1 (1919): 385–393, 388.

25 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, NWIC inv. no. 1195, copy of a petition by 68 merchants to acting governor and councillors, received 14 March 1787, 423–425; copy of a petition signed by 116 merchants and ship captains, dated 15 March 1787, 435–438.

26 NL-HaNA, 2.21.006.49, Collection G.K. van Hogendorp (CVH), inv. no. 154g, copy of a document dated 20 July 1787, nos. 37–66v.

slave trade, and the trade in dyewood, mahogany, cotton, and rum – products that were more in demand on the British market. They maintained contact with all the British islands.<sup>27</sup> The seven to eight North American merchants mainly traded in wood, flour, and provisions – a trade that was subject to large fluctuations in volume and prices. According to Godin, these North American products were immensely important to the island, since it made Statia the cheapest supplier of provisions to the neighboring colonies.<sup>28</sup> There were two major French merchant houses which illegally imported tropical produce, especially sugar, from the French colonies, mainly from Guadeloupe. The French were the major suppliers of return shipments to the Dutch Republic, either directly by shipments to Dutch correspondents, or indirectly by selling tropical produce to Dutch merchants in Statia who then shipped it to the home country.<sup>29</sup>

Some foreign merchants also originated from European countries that did not have direct colonial connections with the Americas. Jean Henri Fabry for example, partner of the merchant house and shipowners of Fabry & Sugnin, and Samuel Chollet and his cousin Louis Chollet, all originated from Switzerland.<sup>30</sup> The merchant and ship-owner Joseph Frankina was a Sicilian.<sup>31</sup> Philip David was a merchant from Prague.<sup>32</sup> The trader Friedrich Nicolas Sander originated from Eppendorp, a town near Hamburg.<sup>33</sup> Fredrich Wilhelm

27 De Hullu, "St. Eustatius," 389–390.

28 Ibid., 390.

29 Ibid.

30 Fabry probably later returned to Switzerland where he continued his business. In the archive of the kanton of Vaud a fragment of his bookkeeping is kept over the period 1792–1798, which partly concerns the period of his stay in St. Eustatius. See: <http://www.davel.vd.ch/detail.aspx?ID=34109> (2013). For Samuel and Louis Chollet, see: NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, Oud archief van St. Eustatius tot 1828 (OASE), inv. no. 123, procuration 15 January 1782, 38r–39r; petition by Samuel Chollet regarding a French prize ship which he bought in 1782, 29 January 1782, 89r–89v, 90r–90v; inv. no. 130, Procuration from Fredrick Sugin, on behalf of Samuel Chollet, dated 6 February 1789, for Juan Baptista Oijarzal in Santo Domingo, to claim a ship, 114r–118v. Chollet was born in Moudon, in the kanton of Bern.

31 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 123, deed of transport for the schooner *Elizabeth*, sold by Joseph Frankina to Henry Duncan and Vincent Deubeda, 12 June 1782, 469r; deed of transport for the schooner *Polly* (renamed *Elizabeth*), sold by Ebenezer Barker to Joseph Frankina, 5 December 1782, 701v–702r; inv. no. 130, last will and testament of Joseph Frankina, 14 March 1789, 193r–198v.

32 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 128, procuration dated 27 March 1787 from Philip David for Abraham Hartog, Jewish merchant established in Amsterdam, to act as his attorney regarding the inheritance from his uncle, Joost Hartog, who died in Altona near Hamburg, 164r–165r.

33 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 129, procuration, dated 7 April 1788, from Fredrich Nicolas Sander, merchant on St. Eustatius, for Barthold Möller, to act on his behalf regarding the settlement of the left estate of his parents, 253r–254v.

Cruwell, partner of the merchant house of Wildrik & Cruwell, came from the German town of Bielefeld.<sup>34</sup> Jan Ernst Kobert, partner of the merchant house of Kobert & Co, had direct trading connections with Hamburg and was probably also of German descent.<sup>35</sup>

Creole whites, stemming from families that had lived in the colony for generations, like the Doncker, Godet, Groebe, Heijliger, Roda, and Runnels families, formed a minority among the white population. They usually also owned plantations and other real estate, trade not being their only economic activity. Statia counted several sugar plantations. Some of these families also owned plantations on St. Martin and on the Danish islands.

Company officials, in some cases locally-born, were also privately involved in commerce. Johannes de Graaff, who was born on St. Eustatius and was governor at the time of the surrender to the British in February 1781, remained active in trade during the 1780s and 1790s.<sup>36</sup> Members of the Beaujon family held high posts in the colonial administrations of St. Eustatius, Curaçao, and Demerara. They established a merchant house on St. Eustatius in 1780, which was later moved to Curaçao.<sup>37</sup> Other Company employees active in trade privately were Alexander le Jeune, Hendrik Pandt and Pieter Ouckama, although they were not amongst the most prominent merchants.<sup>38</sup> In 1790,

34 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 129, procuration, dated 29 April 1788, from Fredrich Wilhelm Cruwell for the merchant house of Jacob Henrich Weber & Son in Bielefeld, to act as his attorney regarding any inheritances from people in or near Bielefeld to which he was entitled, 297r–298r.

35 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 128, Procuracy from Jan Ernst Kobert for Erdwein Henrich Bartels, to make an arrangement with his creditors in Hamburg, both privately and on behalf of Kobert & Co, 30 July 1787, 557r–558r; inv. no. 129, Procuracy of Jan Ernst Kobert for Fredrich Wilhelm Cruwell, merchant on St. Eustatius, to establish current affairs with Dethlefsen & Limprecht on St. Thomas, attorneys of Kobert's creditors, the merchant house of Scramm & Kerstens in Hamburg.

36 De Graaff is mentioned as an exporter of tropical produce in several cargo lists. See for instance: NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 125, cargo list of the ship *Hildegonda Jacoba*, 18 May 1784, fol. 425r–426r; inv. no. 126, cargo list of the ship *Hildegonda Jacoba*, 17 May 1785, fol. 423r–424r; cargo lists of the ships *Vriendschap*, *Jongvrouw Anna Catharina*, and *Meijsje Cornelia*, 7, 19, and 31 July 1786 respectively, fols. 466r–467r, 502r–503r, and 544r–545r; inv. no. 138, cargolist of the ship *Noord Holland*, 24 June 1789, fol. 282r–282r; inv. no. 139, cargo list of the ship *Eensgezindheid*, 31 July 1790, fols. 436r–437r.

37 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 550, financial administration and correspondence of the merchant house of Anthonij Beaujon and Sons, established on St. Eustatius and Curaçao, 1780–1787.

38 Alexander le Jeune exported mainly tobacco and some coffee. He acted as correspondent for the merchant houses of Hanedoes & Van Hanswijk, Zadok & Salomons, and F.W. Holthuijsen, see NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. nos. 126 and 135, cargo lists dated 17 May

Governor Godin borrowed a large sum of money to invest in his private trade.<sup>39</sup> He sent several shipments of sugar, tobacco and coffee to Amsterdam in 1790.<sup>40</sup> He possibly also had an interest in the regional slave trade. A schooner named after him, which was owned by James & Lambert Blair, undertook three voyages to Berbice in 1790, carrying over 200 slaves to this colony.<sup>41</sup>

A last group to be mentioned was formed by expatriate correspondents of merchant houses established in the Dutch Republic. These might be individual merchants that had come to St. Eustatius on their own initiative and usually traded with a number of firms in the Dutch Republic. Or they might be sent to the island to represent a Dutch company overseas. This could be the case with family firms or family networks of merchants. The merchants Matthijs Kerkhoff, Jacob van Putten, David Mendes, and Jan Schimmel Hendriksz, all of whom acted as correspondents for what appear to be relatives in the Dutch Republic, although these contacts were never exclusive.<sup>42</sup> Many of these merchants had also been active before 1781.<sup>43</sup>

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1785, 16 and 22 May 1786, and 31 July 1786; Only on one occasion did Ouckema export a quantity of coffee to J.A. Johanson & Joh. Joosten, see OASE inv. no. 125, cargo list dated 18 May 1784; Hendrik Pandt was active as a merchant between 1785 and 1788, exporting tobacco, coffee, sugar, cotton, hides and a quantity of elephant tusks. He acted as correspondent for prominent merchants like Louis Charles Boswell, Crommelin & Sons, and Hodshon & Son. See OASE inv. nos. 126, 135–138, cargo lists dated 23 April and 13 September 1785; 22 February, 16 May, and 4 September 1786; 16 and 26 May 1788; 24 June 1789.

39 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 131, a loan of f20,000 against an interest of 4 percent per annum, augustus 1790, 507r–508r. He borrowed this sum from Wendelina Eleonora ten Hooven, de widow of Jan Carel Godin.

40 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. nos. 139, cargo lists of the ships *Columbia* and *Eensgezindheid*, 30 March, 31 July, and 9 November 1790, fols. 113r–114r, 436r–437r, and 598r–599r.

41 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 139, cargo lists of the schooner *Governor Godin*, dated 25 May, 10 November, and 22 December 1790, fols. 250r–v, 600r–v, and 692r–v.

42 See for instance: NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 125, cargo lists of the ships *Jonge Juffrouw Margaretha* and *Nooitgedagt*, fols. 195v and 254r–v; inv. no. 135, cargo list of the ship *Amsterdam*, 21 June 1786, no. 187, fols. 422r–423r; inv. no. 138, cargo list of the ship *Thomas*, 21 August 1789, fol. 489r–v; cargo list of the ship *De Hoop*, 13 February 1790, fols. 57r–58r; inv. no. 141, cargo list of the ship *Catharina & Elizabeth*, 31 July 1792, fols. 478r–479r. Matthijs Kerkhoff exported to the merchant house of Jan & Pieter Kerkhoff; Jan Schimmel Hendriksz exported to Rittenberg & Schimmel and to Hendrik Schimmel sr.; Jacob van Putten exported to Joannes van Putten; David Mendes exported to the Mendes Brothers.

43 Victor Enthoven, “That abominable nest of pirates: St. Eustatius and the North Americans, 1680–1780,” in *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 10, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 239–301, 296–297, appendix I. Merchants and shipowners, 1750s.

From the Statian governmental archives, especially the secretarial and notarial deeds, a good impression can be obtained of regional activities and relations. Some of the merchant houses were active on the neighboring islands. Fabry & Sugnin were for some time established in St. Thomas, before they came to St. Eustatius.<sup>44</sup> The Dane Lauretz Harleff Haasum had already been active on St. Eustatius before the British occupation of 1781. Together with his business partner Matthi Pieter Ernst, a merchant in Copenhagen, he operated under the name Haasum & Ernst. The Frenchman Pieter Renardel de Lavalette, who traded with Guadeloupe and Saint-Domingue, later became a third partner. The firm was continued under the name of Haasum, Ernst & Lavalette, and some time later as Haasum & Lavalette, under which name it would move to St. Barthélemy.<sup>45</sup> The merchants Laurens & Christiaan Jurgensen Holm also originated from Denmark. Their brother, Jurgen Jurgensen Holm, was first mate on the Dutch brigantine *Zeven Provinciën*, which sailed several times between St. Eustatius and Amsterdam during the late 1780s and early 1790s.<sup>46</sup>

The German Henrich Wilmans, already mentioned above with regard to his petition to the Swedish king, was active as a merchant in St. Eustatius in 1788, where he acted as an agent for the King of Denmark. During that year he sent various shipments of coffee, tobacco and sugar to Amsterdam.<sup>47</sup> A year earlier

44 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 131, sworn statement regarding a current account between Fabry & Sugnin and the Danish Royal West India Company, 12 May 1790, 234r–236r; copy of the current account, 12 May 1790, 238v–240r.

45 The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom (TNA), High Court of Admiralty (HCA), Prize court papers inv. no. 32/342, claims regarding the cargo of the Dutch ship *Gesina Maria*, master Cornelis Jansze Hofker, seized by British warships *Monarch* and *Panther*, document nos. 5–7, invoice and claim dated 14 March 1782, by the London merchant Richard Puller, acting as an agent and correspondent of Danish Merchants Matthi Pieter Ernst and L.H. Haasum, regarding a shipment of coffee, sugar and tobacco, confiscated property of last mentioned merchants, established in the island of St. Eustatius (thanks to Karwan Fatah-Black); NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 134, no. 213, contract of association, 29 December 1785, 467r–468r; procuration dated 8 November 1785, from L.H. Haasum for Pieter Lavalette to cash debts with debtors of Haasum & Ernst in Saint-Domingue, 346r–347v; inv. no. 139, deeds dated 4 and 15 May 1790, 215r–217v.

46 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 129, procuration, dated 7 April 1788, from Laurens and Christiaan Jurgensen Holm for their brother Jurgen Jurgensen Holm, to act on their behalf to settle the estate of their late father Jurgen Lorentzen in Danmark, 256r–257v; inv. nos. 137–139, cargo lists of the ship *Zeeven Provinciën*, 5 April 1788, 10 February and 30 July 1789, and 5 June 1790.

47 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 137, power of attorney, 12 January 1788, fols. 12r–13v; cargo lists of the ships *Veronica Catharina*, *Johanna*, *Nooijt Gedagt*, and *Noord Holland*, 20 February, 20 and 29 March, and 26 May 1788, fols. 142r–143r, 181r–v, 213r–214r, and 341r–342r respectively.

he had founded a partnership with Henrich Muller on St. Thomas under the name of Henrich Muller & Co. In January 1788 Wilmans agreed to include Jacob Christian Sonntag in the merchant house, who was probably from Hamburg, and who was to participate for one third in this partnership, which was renamed Muller, Sonntag & Comp.<sup>48</sup>

In 1789, Jacob Furtado Ainé, a merchant established in Saint-Domingue, came to St. Eustatius as the representative of the merchant houses of both Isaac Rebeijro Furtado & Moijze Ribeijro Furtado in Cap Français and of David Ribeijro Furtado & fils in Amsterdam. He concluded a contract with Levy Furtado & Abraham Ribeijro Furtado on St. Eustatius. They agreed to a merger under the joint name of Furtado, Frères, Cousin et Comp. This newly established company would be active both in Saint-Domingue and St. Eustatius.<sup>49</sup>

These examples demonstrate that the merchant community of St. Eustatius formed part of a complicated network that extended to neighboring colonies as well as to various countries in Europe directly. Nearly all merchants mentioned above were also major exporters to the Dutch Republic and acted as correspondents for merchant houses in the Dutch Republic. Based on the information extracted from 150 cargo lists out of a total of 180 shipments for the period 1781–1795, about 340 merchant houses that shipped tropical produce to the Dutch Republic could be identified on Statia. In the Dutch Republic, more than twice as many firms were active in trade with Statia, although many are only mentioned occasionally and the quantities of their imports were often relatively small. The actual number of individuals involved in trade on both sides might have been smaller, because both in the home country and in the colony, merchants operated in changing alliances.<sup>50</sup>

Free blacks and coloreds were also active in Statian commerce and shipping but on a very modest scale. Unlike Curaçao, where around 1790 more than half of the free population was non-white, free blacks and coloreds on Statia only formed a small minority.<sup>51</sup> In that same year Statia counted 7830 inhabitants:

48 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 137, ship's manifests, 20 February, 29–30 March, and 26 May 1788, 142r–143v, 181r–v, 213r–214r, 181r–v, 341r–342r; Procuration, dated 12 January 1788, from Jacob Christian Sonntag, on behalf of Claus Henrich Sonntag in Hamburg, to settle financial affairs with a man called Jürgen Rohde in St. Thomas, who had mortgaged his plantation to Sonntag for 41,997 mark, 12r–13v; inv. no. 129, contract of commerce and companyship, 11 January 1788, 43r–45v.

49 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 130, contract 23 January 1789, 59r–64r.

50 NL-HaNA, 1.05.213.01, OASE inv. nos. 124–126, 131, 134–141, and 143–144, cargo lists. <https://easy.dans.knaw.nl/ui/datasets/id/easy-dataset:54485> (2013).

51 Wim Klooster, "Subordinate but proud: Curaçao's free blacks and mulattoes in the eighteenth century," *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 68, nos. 3–4 (1994): 283–300, 289, Table 2.

4944 slaves (63 percent), 2375 whites (30 percent), and only 511 free blacks and coloreds (7 percent).<sup>52</sup> The Statian slaves were employed on the island's sugar plantations, but also in the town of Oranjestad as house slaves and craftsmen, as dockhands in the Lower Town, and as sailors on board the Statian ships. It is not clear why Statia had only a relatively small free non-white population compared to Curaçao. Statia's much later economic rise might have been of influence here. Curaçao, by the end of the seventeenth century, already had a busy port and a rapidly growing urban area offering possibilities for slaves to earn an income of their own, save money and buy their freedom.<sup>53</sup>

In contrast to Curaçao, in Statian judicial and notarial documents, free blacks and coloreds are only occasionally mentioned. In the notarial archives only a few wills of free non-whites have been found.<sup>54</sup> And over a ten year period from December 1781 until December 1790, no more than four transport deeds could be retrieved regarding the sale of real estate and nine regarding the sale of slaves, in which free blacks or coloreds were involved.<sup>55</sup> Statian free black and colored men also would have been employed as sailors. From a sample of 203 muster rolls of local merchant ships, issued between 1781 and

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In 1789, Curaçao counted 20,988 inhabitants: 12,864 slaves (61 percent), 3564 whites (17 percent), 3714 free non-whites (18 percent), and a group of 864 "free servants" (4 percent), who were probably colored but could also have been white. In total, 11,543 people (55 percent) lived in the urban area around the harbor. Of the free non-whites 70 percent lived in town, mainly in Otrobanda.

52 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, NWIC, inv. no. 1196, return of the population in 1789, 706–707.

53 Han Jordaan, *Slavernij en vrijheid op Curaçao. De dynamiek van een achttiende-eeuws Atlantisch handelsknooppunt* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2013).

54 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 123, ff. 381r–v and 606r–v, two testaments of the free black woman Cathy, dated 4 July and 27 September 1782 respectively; *ibid.*, fols. 373r–v, testament of the free black woman Cloe, 2 July 1782; inv. no. 124, fol. 66r, last will and testament of the free black John Quacu, dated 17 January 1783; *ibidem*, fols. 486r, 487r–488r, deed of opening of the last will and testament of Thomas Crooke, dated 5 July 1783, and the original testament dated 9 March 1780; inv. no. 131, fols. 323r–325r, last will and testament of the free black woman Mary Harris, alias Creagh, dated 28 June 1790.

55 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 123, fols. 553r–v, 612r–v, transport deeds of 17 August (house) and 3 October 1782 (slave) respectively; inv. no. 124, fols. 103r–v, 125r, 135r–v, 442r, transport deeds of 4 March (slave; later cancelled), 11 March (slave), 18 March (house), and 23 June 1783 (slave; the buyer is the mother; for the manumission of the same slave, see letter of manumission of 24 June 1783, ff. 444v–445r) respectively; inv. no. 128, fols. 611r–v, transport deed of 23 August 1787 (slave); inv. no. 135, f. 555r and 556r, transport deeds of 24 March and 2 June 1786 (slaves); inv. no. 137, fols. 640r–v, 712r–v, transport deed of 18 October 1788 (house) and 3 December 1788 (slave; sold by a free mulatto woman from St. Kitts); inv. no. 138, fols. 512r–513r, transport deed of 1 September 1789 (house).



1795, in which 2208 crew members were registered, 856 were listed as non-white, both slave and free.<sup>56</sup> Since there was only a relatively small group of free male non-white Statians – in 1789 there were only 39 free black and 67 free colored men between 16 and 60 years of age<sup>57</sup> – many of these sailors probably originated from neighboring colonies, and partly also from Curaçao.<sup>58</sup> On a total of 163 listed shipowners in the muster rolls, only six (one of which was a woman) were designated as free non-whites. Most of these non-white shipowners only became active in the 1790s.<sup>59</sup> Only a handful of free non-white Statians were active in trade, probably mostly by running a small shop like the free mestizo woman Jenny Fletcher who sold textiles.<sup>60</sup>

Because of their small numbers, the free non-whites were not considered as a potential threat by the Statian whites. But during the revolutionary period of the 1790s, Statian whites were suspicious of blacks and coloreds coming to their island from other places, especially the French colonies. In 1793, foreign free blacks and coloreds were ordered to leave the island, and those newly arrived were not admitted to the colony unless they had obtained special permission because they had been on Statia before and were known to be of good

56 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. nos. 123–131, 134–139.

57 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, NWIC, inv. no. 1196, return of the population in 1789, 706.

58 It can be deduced from the sources that a Curaçao community was living on St. Eustatius from the fact that there was a location called “Curaçao Dorp” (Curaçao Village). See: NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 137, fols. 358r–359r, deed of transport of a house in the so-called “Curaçaose Dorp,” situated on a plot of land belonging to Laurence Salomons, and inhabited by the free black Cyrus, dated 31 May 1788.

59 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 137, fol. 373r, muster roll of the sloop *Twee Vrienden*, 5 June 1788, owned by the free mulattoes George Lacombe and Domingo Serido; inv. no. 141, 604r, muster roll of the barque *Catherine*, 10 November 1792, owned by the free mulattoes George Lacombe and Domingo Serido; inv. no. 143, fols. 466r and 651r, muster rolls of the barque *Defiance*, 16 May and 24 July 1793, owned by the free black Peter Doncker; *ibid.*, fol. 563r, muster roll of the barque *Dolphin*, 25 June 1793, free mulattoes George Lacombe and Domingo Serido; *ibid.*, fol. 633r, muster roll of the schooner *Fly & Delight*, 17 July 1793, owned by the free mestizo Labbe Walrand; inv. no. 144, muster roll of the schooner *Jenny & Venus*, 26 July 1794, owned by the free black Peter Doncker; *ibid.*, fols. 405r and 505r, muster rolls of the sloop *Fly* and the barque *Success*, 20 May and 2 July 1794, owned by the free mestizo Labbe Walrand together with the free mulatto Benjamin Solomon; *ibid.*, fols. 478r and 521r, muster rolls of the schooner *Twee Broeders*, 28 June and 15 July 1794, owned by the free mulatto woman Leonora Lagan.

60 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 139, fol. 489r–v, report of an inspection regarding the damage caused by a burglary in the shop of the free mestizo Jenny Fletcher situated on the bay, 29 August 1790.

conduct. It was prohibited for Statian free blacks and coloreds to house or hide any foreign free non-whites.<sup>61</sup>

After the Danish decree of 1764 proclaiming St. Thomas and St. John free ports, there was no instant explosion of merchant interest in the colonies. There are very few records detailing the urban population and its activities during this time. St. Thomas was still very much a plantation economy, overshadowed as it was by the extensive cultivation of St. Croix. In 1773, there were 39 sugar and 43 cotton estates, owned mostly by Dutch families present on the island since its early colonization. The plantations were worked by 2523 slaves, and overseen by 42 white persons. It was not until the American War of Independence that there was some added impetus for trade through Charlotte Amalie. The free port now found some utility among neutrals and belligerents alike. The Danish government itself would not pass on the opportunity to profit from the wartime economy of St. Thomas. The *Vestindisk Handelsselskab* (VHS) was created as a limited-charter company in 1778, amassed by the capital of Danish government officials and wealthy Copenhagen merchants. The directors of the Company had their sights set on the importation of Spanish and French colonial goods, primarily coffee, so as not to interfere with the sugar economy on St. Croix. During its short existence, the VHS contributed to making Copenhagen a major center for the re-exportation of coffee in the Baltic, but was also riddled with administrative problems and financial vagaries. It was finally bought in its entirety by the Danish crown in 1786, as the return of peaceful conditions could not sustain its already floundering business.<sup>62</sup>

Regarding private commercial networks, there is little more to be found in the written sources than some glimpses into the polyglot community that was composed by Charlotte Amalie merchants. A Danish-German traveler, J.P. Nissen, sailing to St. Thomas in 1792, wrote that the number of white inhabitants on the island “may have been between four and five hundred: the greater part of them were Creoles, – the remainder consisted then already of persons of all nations, and almost every language was spoken among them.” Nissen, then a wine merchant’s apprentice, observed the harbor and the movements

61 J.A. Schiltkamp and J.Th. de Smidt, eds., *West Indisch Plakaatboek, 3, Nederlandse Antillen, Bovenwinden, Publikaties en andere wetten betrekking hebbende op St. Maarten, St. Eustatius en Saba, 1648/1681–1816* (Amsterdam: Emmering, 1979), St. Eustatius, no. 91, publication April 1793, 353–355.

62 John P. Knox, *A historical account of St. Thomas* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1852), 89–91; 117–119; P.P. Sveistrup, “Det Kongelige octroyerde Vestindiske Handelsselskab 1778–1785. En drifstøkonomisk undersøgelse,” *Historisk tidsskrift* 10, no. 6 (1942): 385–427.

through it. There were large ships arriving from Hamburg, Altona, Flensburg and Copenhagen, trading their textiles and manufactures and loading colonial goods such as Puerto Rico tobacco and coffee for a return voyage. The greatest part of the intra-Caribbean trade that came into the harbor “were American vessels, small Spanish sloops and boats, and large English merchant-men.” The Americans brought in provisions, lumber and shingles, and they sailed out with rum and sugar in return. The Spaniards exchanged German linens and English manufactured goods, bringing along much-needed silver coin from the Spanish main and Puerto Rico. The Charlotte Amalie of 1792 that Nissen wrote about was a cosmopolitan Caribbean port with regional connections, especially with Spanish dominions, whose trade was of the utmost importance. The ties with European shipping were also there, with Danish ships importing all varieties of colonial goods with the conspicuous exception of sugar, a result of the exclusive sugar trading rights for St. Croix inhabitants.<sup>63</sup>

Whereas many merchants in Statia and St. Thomas had been living in the islands for decades, the early history of Swedish St. Barthélemy presents a different population structure. Contemporary Swedish observers in 1788 saw an island inhabited by a “great many adventurers.” These persons were maritime transients, who, for the most part, had come there running from creditors elsewhere and would have no qualms leaving the island again if the opportunity arose. Settled merchants with sizeable capital and property were few, and the trade circulating through the harbor of Gustavia was by all accounts modest in scope and nature. There were, for example, the Americans Arthurton and Basden, who traded North American merchandise for rum and sugar coming from surrounding islands. There was a group of petty French traders, among them Bernié, Le May, Renaldy, Junius and Martins, who dealt in a small-scale retailing of French goods, such as textiles, wines, haberdashery, glass- and tin-ware. There were also a few traders acting as commissioners or agents for merchants on other islands such as St. Martin and St. Kitts. The firm of Haasum and Lavalette which, as mentioned earlier, was also established in St. Eustatius, was the only business which retailed goods from the Dutch islands, and they were also involved in the American trade. The majority of the urban population were not actively involved in intra-Caribbean trade, but were employed as artisans, hawkers, and shop- and innkeepers.<sup>64</sup>

63 J.P. Nissen, *Reminiscences of a 46 Years Residence in the Islands of St. Thomas in the West Indies* (Nazareth, PA: Senseman & Co., 1838), 7–9.

64 Christopher Carlander, *Resan till St Barthélemy. Dr. Christopher Carlanders resejournal 1787–1788* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vetenskapsakademien, 1969), 74–80.

The trade passing through St. Barthélemy in its early phase of Swedish colonization was, at times, lively, but was as a rule dominated by often illicit, small-scale regional cabotage journeys, which lacked the European-bound character of the commerce present in Statia and St. Thomas at the same time. In 1787 for instance, for which there are some rare surviving custom house records, the port of Gustavia was visited by 1033 ships. A general impression of the trade emerges from the figures of the busiest month of June. There were 159 arrivals, of which a large majority of 78 vessels came from British colonies in the Caribbean. Twenty-six ships came from North American ports, from Guadeloupe and Martinique there were nine arrivals and from Statia there were 21. There was only a single vessel coming from the Danish colonies. Departures for the same period display essentially the same pattern, with 84 departures for British colonial destinations, 14 departures for North America, 29 for Statia, six for Guadeloupe and Martinique and, finally, two vessels for the Danish colonies. During the ten extant months found in the custom house records of 1787, only three Swedish ships entered the harbor from European ports of departure. Not a single non-Swedish ship arrived from Europe during the same year. The establishment of the SWIC would not change the picture considerably regarding traffic from Sweden. The majority of the vessels clearing through Gustavia were small packboats, schooners and sloops, of around 20 Swedish lasts or roughly 40 tons. The only exception was the American-flagged ships, generally of a larger build. The ships traveling back and forth from North American ports carried lumber, victuals and tobacco, while ships coming from neighboring colonies freighted local produce such as sugar, coffee, rum and molasses.<sup>65</sup>

After news of the Dutch Patriot coup had reached St. Barthélemy in January 1788, there passed a brief moment of high anticipation among the Swedish officials on the island. A few wealthy merchants from surrounding islands, including St. Eustatius, had recently bought lots of land and rented property in Gustavia, and the governor, Von Rosenstein, also counted on a rumored Anglo-French war as an opportunity for the small island to advance its role as a regional marketplace.<sup>66</sup> The hopes were in vain, however, as no regime change came about in the Dutch Republic, and there was no international conflict yet between Great Britain and France. Instead, Sweden itself was entangled in a war with Russia, which led to considerable delays for the Swedish colonial project. The commercial networks of St. Barthélemy would remain of a circumscribed and local character at least up until the outbreak of war in 1793.

65 Custom house records 1787, SBS 28, SNA; Hildebrand, *Den svenska kolonin S:t Barthélemy*, 163–164.

66 Von Rosenstein's report 21 January 1788, SBS 1B:1, SNA.

That year would bring the beginning of a transformation of the transit trade in the region, which would have consequences for Gustavia as well as Charlotte Amalie.

### Changing Conditions on St. Eustatius and Migration to the Scandinavian Colonies After 1795

The picture that emerges after 1781 shows that the Statian economy, in the first place, suffered from the lack of a clear trade policy as a result of the particularism of various parties in the Dutch Republic vis-à-vis demands from possibly equally self-interested merchants in St. Eustatius. During the economic heyday preceding the British occupation, the many hundreds of American, British, and French merchant ships that called at the island provided the Company with a handsome income from the duties paid on imports and exports, moorage etc. At the same time, a steady and voluminous stream of tropical produce reached the home country; exporters in the Dutch Republic found a ready market for their products and many industries and suppliers directly or indirectly associated with the Statian trade also benefited. During the years following the British occupation in 1781, the volume of shipping and trade dropped considerably, reducing not only the income of the Company but also reducing the turnover and profits of many Dutch merchants and other entrepreneurs who had previously benefited from the Statian trade. The WIC intended to repair its loss of proceeds and decided in 1786 to raise the tariffs on trade in St. Eustatius. This caused a vehement reaction from the Statian merchant community. In a number of petitions, proposals, and memorials, coauthored by some prominent foreign merchants like the Frenchman Vaucrosson and the Bermudian R.D. Jennings, the Company plans were protested while fears were uttered regarding the growing competition from the Danish and Swedish free ports as well as French, Spanish, and British free trade experiments. It was feared that the intended increase of duties would be the deathblow for the Statian trade.<sup>67</sup>

67 Schiltkamp and De Smidt, *West Indisch Plakaatboek*, 3, St. Maarten no. 149, "Resolutie van de bewindhebbers van de WIC van 9 oktober 1786 het overgezonden tarief van in- en uitvoerrechten van kracht te doen zijn," 17/19 Februarij 1787, 122; NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, NWIC inv. no. 1195, copy of a petition by David Mendez, F. Sugnin, W. Stevenson, Daniel Hopker, R.D. Jennings, M. Dubrois Godet, Jan Schimmel Hendriksz, Vaucrosson, received 21 March 1787, 351–357; copy of a petition by 68 merchants to acting governor and councilors, received 14 March 1787, 423–425; copy of a petition by David Mendes, Frederik

The growth and decline of economic activity on St. Eustatius is usually gauged by the numbers of ships entering and clearing Orange Bay. In 1792, an average of nearly 300 ships a month called at the island, a number comparable to pre-1781 conditions and an indication that supposed regional competition was at that time hardly felt. Exports to the Dutch Republic, however, although clearly recovering after peace was concluded in 1784, did not reach the same levels as during the 1770s. In 1792, the highest post-war volume of trade was reached when 28 ships laden with tropical produce sailed to the home country. After the first half of 1793 – in February France had declared war on the Dutch Republic – the monthly number of ships dropping anchor in the Statian roadstead was suddenly halved.<sup>68</sup> Registers of incoming and outgoing ships for the years thereafter have not been found, but in the archive of St. Eustatius a register of import duties was preserved. The figures regarding the money collected monthly from arriving ships make the demise of the colony as an Atlantic trading hub visible. Until August 1793, an average monthly amount of 433 pesos or Spanish dollars<sup>69</sup> (f1049) was received. This fell to

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Sugnin, William Stevenson, Daniel Hopker, R.D. Jennings, Martin Dubrois Godet, Jan Schimmel Hendrisz, Vaucrosson and Hendrik Pandt to acting governor and councillors, 21 maart 1787, 427–432; copy of a petition signed by 116 merchants and ship captains, dated 15 March 1787, 435–438; “Memorie en Representatie tot Herstel van den handel & vaart des Eijlands St. Eustatius,” by Jan Schimmel Hendiksz, Hendrik Pandt and D. Mendez, 17 juli 1787, 599–625; copy of a statement by Martin Dubrois Godet, received 20 July 1787, 627–636; NL-HaNA, 2.21.006.49, CVH inv. no. 154g, copy of a document dated 20 July 1787, signed by R.D. Jennings, Vaucrosson, and W. Stevenson, nos. 37–66v.

68 NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, NWIC inv. no. 633, list of incoming and outgoing ships 1778, 111–286; inv. no. 635, register of incoming and outgoing ships 1784, 131–283; 1.05.02, Raad van Coloniën (RvC) inv. no. 90, monthly registers of incoming and outgoing ships, January 1792–December 1793.

69 The peso, Spanish dollar, or piastre gourde was the regular currency and financial unit of account in both the Dutch Leeward and Windward Islands, as well as in the Danish and Swedish colonies. The commercial exchange rate between the peso and Swedish and Danish rixdollars are not precisely known, but Swedish descriptions from around 1786 give one piastre gourde as equal 42–44 shillings specie. That is, not quite one Swedish rixdollar specie (48 shillings specie). Hildebrand, *Den svenska kolonin St Barthélemy* 67–69; I have yet to find any estimate for the Danish colonies, as there was an established difference between West Indies current money (*vestindisk courant*) and Danish current money (*dansk courant*), which was universally given in account books and the like. Commercial exchange rates, of course, depended on many other factors apart from face value and the weight in silver. See the discussion in John J. McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America* (London: MacMillan, 1978), 116–120, 291–299.

185 pesos (ƒ444) a month during the remaining part of that year. In 1794, the monthly average rose a little to 228 pesos (ƒ547), but in 1795 it fell to 64 pesos (ƒ153). In 1796 and 1797, the last years for which information is available, this figure plummeted to a mere 29 pesos (ƒ69) and 20 pesos (ƒ48) a month, respectively.<sup>70</sup>

This coincides with the decrease in exports from Statia to the Dutch Republic. After 1792, the number of shipments declined with only one ship sailing to the home country in 1795. The explanation for this development is clear: war. During the turbulent two decades that followed after the outbreak of the French Revolution, the Dutch were almost continually involved as one of the belligerents. Between 1793 and 1795, the Dutch were at war with revolutionary France. After French troops invaded the Republic and the Batavian Republic was proclaimed in January 1795, the Dutch sided with France in the war against Great Britain. In that same year, St. Eustatius was put under the “protection” of the French, which came down to a de facto occupation that lasted until 1801, when the British conquered the three Dutch Leeward Islands. During this period, the French colonies – the most important suppliers of tropical produce to Statia – were largely in a state of chaos as far as they had not been occupied by the British. The United States, another very important trading partner, was entangled in the so-called Quasi War with France between 1798 and 1800. During these years, French privateers were actively hunting down American vessels in Caribbean waters, so these were not likely to call at an island that was controlled by the French. Statia, St. Martin, and Saba were returned to the Dutch after the Peace of Amiens in 1802. But by that time, the Dutch Leeward colonies had economically become totally insignificant. A year later, the war was continued. In 1810 the islands were again occupied by the British. When Statia came under Dutch rule again in 1816, its population had declined to 2591: 507 whites, 336 free coloreds and 1748 slaves.<sup>71</sup>

The Scandinavian free port colonies could be neutral havens where refugees would find accommodation whether they ran from debt, conflict, persecution or other calamities, or, in the case of the Statians discussed below, where they sought greater economic opportunity. The nature of turmoil in the region from the 1790s

70 NL-HaNA, 1.05.13.01, OASE inv. no. 240, register of collected import duties, September 1792–October 1797.

71 Cornelis C. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas, 1680–1791* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Co, 1985), 146–154; For the repercussions of the Quasi War for the Dutch in the Caribbean see also: Han Jordaan, “Patriots, privateers and international politics: the myth of the conspiracy of Jean Baptiste Tierce Cadet,” in *Curaçao in the Age of Revolutions, 1795–1800*, ed. Wim Klooster and Gert Oostindie (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2011), 141–169.

onwards resulted in extensive and complex migration flows, as Caribbean colonies were engulfed in internal conflicts and were subject to external aggression. After the news of the French Revolution reached the Caribbean in 1789, Frenchmen of various political convictions took refuge on neutral islands. St. Barthélemy received many refugees from Martinique and Guadeloupe, whereas St. Thomas was a destination for refugees from Saint-Domingue. Successive migration waves occurred after the Revolution, during the British occupations of neighboring islands, and after Guadeloupe was retaken by Victor Hugues in 1794.

A first great wave of migration took place in 1793–1794 by a heterogeneous group of inhabitants from Martinique and Guadeloupe, consisting both of revolutionary sympathizers and royalists. In May of 1793, the Swedish Governor Bagge commented with mixed sentiments on the arrival of French families. On the one hand, he lamented granting protection to foreign “adventurers” and bankrupt persons, which he saw as a potential threat to public tranquillity. On the other hand, he welcomed those “familiar traders” from the French islands who brought with them “considerable property, consisting of slaves, households, cash etc.”<sup>72</sup>

Other immigrants were also influencing the turn of events in the neutral free ports. The French capture of Statia, St. Martin and Saba in 1795 prompted an exodus of their former inhabitants. St. Eustatius was a source of considerable migration. A cohort of displaced St. Eustatius merchants became naturalized Swedish and Danish subjects towards the close of the eighteenth century, and some would be of great consequence for their newly-adopted home colonies. Already in 1781 there had been a slight surge in Dutch-language migrants to St. Thomas, a likely effect of the smaller relocations or resettlements from Statia after the British occupation in 1781. The remainder of the settlers bore English, Spanish and French names, few of which could be definitively linked to Dutch colonies.<sup>73</sup> The emigration of some Sephardic Jews from St. Eustatius to St. Thomas after 1781 is an exception, but it is difficult to trace other non-Dutch former residents of Statia from the available evidence. The records do not show any significant migration of former Dutch colonial residents prior to the mid-1790s in either of the Scandinavian colonies. Judging by the available statistics, there is a markedly higher increase in the population of St. Barthélemy around 1795 than figures for corresponding years in St. Thomas. Evidence of

72 C.F. Bagge's report 28 May 1793, SBS 1B:2, SNA.

73 St. Thomas og St. Jan guvernement mm.; Gruppeordnede sager – Sociale og kulturelle forhold; Borgerbrevsprotokoll 1755–1788, 693/11.53.171, Vestindiske lokalarkiver, DNA; Anne Lebel, “Saint Barthélemy et ses archives: une connaissance historique éclatée,” *Bulletin de la société d'histoire de la Guadeloupe* 59 (2011): 91–102, 96.



Dutch colonists immigrating to the Swedish colony is found in other documentary evidence. The Swedish judge Johan Norderling wrote to the Board of Directors of the SWIC in July of 1795 detailing the recent growth of Gustavia. He wrote, "The amount of houses are now nearly doubled, some of them quite beautiful," and went on to comment that, "All trade in St. Eustache is ruined, all warehouses at the present closed, and the wealthier houses gone away, some here, some to other islands."<sup>74</sup>

Indeed, supporting Norderling's assertion of the transformation of Gustavia, it is clearly evident from town maps drawn out in 1791, 1796, 1799 and 1800 respectively, that the expansion of Gustavia was considerable during this time. In 1791, the town was composed of 133 buildings, while in 1796 this figure had nearly trebled, and in 1800 the town could boast over 800 separate buildings ranging from the largest warehouse to the smallest cooking shed.<sup>75</sup> Norderling attributed this growth to the Statian merchants, and he also hinted at the wealth that some apparently brought with them. Others made similar conclusions, such as the Company agent Gustav Wernberg, who thought the island could "reap great profits" from the recent immigration from the Dutch colonies, "if only a perfect neutrality would be observed, and that no Nation should be favored par preference."<sup>76</sup> The available statistics offer an overview of the migration to the islands of St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy between 1789–1838, as shown in Tables 11.1 and 11.2.

While many migrants arrived solely because they needed a sanctuary, there were many who stayed and became naturalized inhabitants of their new colonies. In order for foreigners to become a naturalized Swedish or Danish subject by settling in Gustavia or Charlotte Amalie, they had to make a cash payment and sign an oath of fidelity and allegiance. St. Barthélemy had a differential scale for payment for naturalization and burgher rights. For merchants who wanted to be able to sail their vessels under Swedish colors, a one-time

74 J. Norderling to SWIC, 13.7.1795, Handel och sjöfart, vol. 169, SNA. "All handel i St. Eustache är förstörd, alla magaziner tilsvdare igenslagne, och de rikare husen bortflyttade, en del hit, en del til andra öar – Den som lämnat St. Barthelemy för tre år sedan, skulle nu knappast igenkänna staden Gustavia: Antalet af husen äro nära fördubblade och några af dem tåmeligen vackra."

75 Samuel Fahlberg, *Charta öfver Gustavia på S:t Barthelemi Som det förhöllt sig den 30 april 1796*; Samuel Fahlberg, *Charta öfver Staden Gustavia*, dated Gustavia 18 October 1799; Samuel Fahlberg, *Charta öfver Staden Gustavia*, dated Gustavia 12 April 1800, The Military Archives of Sweden; see also Holger Weiss, "Det svenska kolonialprojektets komplexa rum: om slaveriet under svensk flagg i slutet av 1700-talets karibiska och atlantiska värld," *Sjuttonhundratals. Nordic Yearbook for Eighteenth-Century Studies* (2012), 59–92.

76 G. Wernberg to SWIC, 14.9.1795, Handel och sjöfart, vol. 169, SNA.

TABLE 11.1 *Urban population, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, 1789–1838.*

Year	Urban slaves	Urban free colored	Urban white	Total urban	Island total free & slave	Urban as percentage of island total	Slaves as percentage of urban total
1789	1527	260	398	2185	5266	39.5	73.2
1794	1715	243	578	2536	4627	54.8	67.6
1796	2021	239	619	2879	5720	50.3	70.2
1797	1943	239	726	2908	5734	50.7	66.8
1800	2561	714	1185	4460	7699	57.9	57.4
1831	2894	3408	4769	11,071	13,492	82.0	26.1
1838	2093	5024	1770	8887	11,433	77.7	23.5

Source: Reviderede vestindiske regnskaber; Matrikel for St. Thomas og St. Jan 1755–1915, dna; Neville Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 90, 189.

TABLE 11.2 *Urban population, Gustavia, St. Barthélemy, 1788–1838.*

Year	Urban slaves	Urban free colored	Urban white	Total urban	Island total free & slave	Urban as percentage of island total	Slaves as percentage of urban total
1788	279	83	294	656	1663	39.4	42.5
1794	554	590*	—	1144	2212	51.7	25
1796	981	388	682	2051	3190	64.3	47.8
1806	1424	802	835	3061	—**	**	46.5
1812	1818	1025	1038	3881	5482	70.7	33.2
1819	—**	—**	—**	2910	4587	63.4	—**
1834	—**	—**	—**	2080	3720	55.9	—**
1838	338	1074*	—	1412	2965	47.6	11.4

Sources: St. Barthélemysamlingen (sbs) 28, sna; Yolande Lavoie, Carolyn Fick and Francine-M. Mayer, "A Particular Study of Slavery in the Caribbean Island of Saint Barthélemy: 1648–1846," *Caribbean Studies* 28, no. 2 (1995): 369–403; Yolande Lavoie, "Histoire sociale et démographique d'une communauté isolée: Saint Barthélemy (Antilles françaises)," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 42, no. 3 (1989): 411–427.

\* This figure includes the total for whites as well.

\*\* Figures for these groups are not available.

payment of 100 pesos was necessary. For settlers who wanted to support themselves by crafts or other business ventures within the town limits, 16 Spanish dollars was required. For the right of simply being a Swedish subject and the right of residence in Gustavia, only one dollar was to be paid. These scales were a clear reflection of both the ambition to attract merchants who carried substantial capital and the desire to make it easy to provide settlement for the much-needed mariners and craftsmen who were the bulk of the workforce.<sup>77</sup>

The next years would see some notable Statian émigrés becoming Swedish or Danish subjects. The most prominent merchants to move from St. Eustatius to St. Barthélemy, for example, were not Dutch by birth. A notable migrant from St. Eustatius was the Italian John Joseph Cremony, a native of Gaeta, near Naples. Born in 1756, he had established himself as a Statian merchant in 1781, as he was enumerated in the list of burghers that the British had made up during the occupation. He seems to have settled in St. Barthélemy by 1796, as had the Vaucrosson family. Both Cremony and the Vaucrossons came to have leading positions in the mixed community that was Gustavia after the migrations of the 1790s. The migrants' transition to a new colony was not one characterized by complete accord with the new administration and smooth accommodation into a new society. The freedom of trade in both St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy was hampered by restrictions that had been non-existent in Statia. Locally registered ships were, as a rule, not allowed to freight ships to Europe under Swedish or Danish flags. Local merchants who wished to remit cargoes to European ports were forced to find circuitous and costly means to do this, usually chartering ships under a different flag. This was a great source of discontent among the merchant elite, and was the most serious question surrounding trade in the colonies during the early nineteenth century. Abraham Runnels, a Statian residing in St. Barthélemy, summed up the pleas of the merchant class in a letter to the Swedish Trade and Finance Department in 1814, in which he stated that:

[...] three essential links in the chain is wanting. Namely the confidence of the Merchants in Sweden, the facilities of Markets for colonial produce within her Territories and the faculty of navigating with the vessels of this colony in the European Seas & Ports. If the comparison could be rendered

77 See, for example, "HIS MAJESTY'S Gracious Taxation Act, whereafter the below specified Public duties on the Island of St. Bartholomew are provisionally to be paid, Given at the Palace of Carlsruhe March 26, 1804," *Report of Saint Bartholomew*, 26 September 1804. Similar taxations were in effect in earlier years, but this is the first documented taxation act found in print. <http://www.memoirestbarth.com/st-barts/traite-negriere/premier-journal-local>.

complete by supplying the chain with these three links, we might be unconcerned about the rivalry of any new free ports (which could grow out of a new order of things) possessing no greater physical means than we do; but possibly not so favored in the matter of jurisprudence.<sup>78</sup>

According to Runnels, the restrictions exacerbated the fact that commerce on the island was too dependent on North American shipping, which, in reality, was the only source of outside supplies and provisions to the nearby colonies. Runnels was writing this when the War of 1812 still raged between the United States and Great Britain. The war was, by all available accounts, the zenith of profitability for the Swedish colony in terms of harborside traffic, but the North American merchants enjoyed the most advantages, according to Runnels. The “new order of things” was a reference to the resumption of peacetime commerce, which would inevitably entail the return of occupied colonies to their former owners.

It is slightly more problematic to detail the instances of Stavian merchants moving to St. Thomas, as burgher brief protocols are missing for key years from the 1790s onwards. However, in an undated and unsigned report found in the local administrative archive of St. Barthélemy, there is some unequivocal evidence of relocated Stavians residing in St. Thomas. The report was in all likelihood penned by the Swedish harbormaster at St. Barthélemy, Anders Furuträd, because he had been assigned in 1802 to investigate the rival Danish colony from a large number of perspectives, and the report is the likely end result of these investigations. The report is a systematic overview of conditions and regulations in the Danish colony, and it is attached with a list of the island’s “most distinguished” merchants. At the top of this list, the Bermudian and former Stavian resident Richard Downing Jennings is found, perhaps not so surprisingly, as the dominantly Anglophone Danish island of St. Thomas had for some time become a node in Bermudian trade networks.<sup>79</sup>

If focus is shifted onto other groups than the white merchant elite, there are other migration patterns to observe. In the free ports, seafaring and artisan trades constituted the major areas of occupation. The growth of the free colored population of Charlotte Amalie had been dramatic during the first three

78 Abraham Runnels to Carl David Skogman, 9 June 1814, St Barthélemy-samlingen (SBS), vol. 3 A, SNA.

79 Image 281–282, vol. 260, Correspondence (C), Fonds Suédois de Saint-Barthélemy (FSB), Archives nationales d’outre-mer (ANOM), Aix-en-Provence, Uppsala University FSB digitization project; For further examples of Stavians and Bermudians in St. Thomas, see Jarvis, *In the Eye Of All Trade*, 163–167, 170, 353, 432.

decades of the nineteenth century. The enumerated population of Charlotte Amalie's able-bodied free colored male adult population on 28 May 1802 shows a total of 221 individuals. The enumeration indicates the origin of these inhabitants, one originating from St. John, ten from St. Croix and 122 from St. Thomas. Out of the remaining 89 – 40 percent of the total – all were of foreign origin. Among those émigrés, a majority of 39 were former residents of Curaçao, whereas 30 others hailed from neighboring St. Eustatius. The remainder came from French and British colonies, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Barbados and Jamaica. These inhabitants display a pattern of continuing intra-Caribbean migration reinforced by political vicissitudes reverberating in the region. Immigration was also likely to be influenced by existing ties of ethnicity, family and commerce. The existence of this list is due to some very specific motivations. The rapid increase in the size of the free colored population, coupled with its high foreign component, led to some fears among the governing white population. It influenced the Danish governor-general von Walterstorff to establish the first "St. Thomas Commission for the Registering of the Free Coloured" in February of 1803. It raised questions about whether the presence of foreign free coloreds was desirable and advantageous or if it was a dangerous burden to the colony. Von Walterstorff specifically targeted colored migrants from the French colonies because of their perceived subversive ideas and activities inspired by the French and Haitian Revolutions. It also highlighted the large number of women from Curaçao and elsewhere who roamed the streets of Charlotte Amalie, engaging in petty trade and bartering. It was observed that their knowledge of Spanish and Spanish customs placed the local creoles at a disadvantage, because these women could acquire and sell merchandise from nearby Puerto Rico with ease and usually with high profit margins. The commission outlined some possible measures, ranging from targeted taxation to outright deportations, but none of these proposals seems to have materialized, save for the expulsion of a select number of free colored persons with origins in French West Indian colonies. The commission and its records are indicative of the ambiguous attitudes of colonial administrators in the Danish West Indies towards different types of migrants. While the overall view of migration and settlement in the free ports was benign, administrators differentiated between what they perceived to be valuable as opposed to potentially disruptive external elements in their colonies. Comparing Walterstorff's concerns about free colored migrations with the gleeful accounts of wealthy Statian settlement on St. Barthélemy by local officials, this becomes quite clear.<sup>80</sup>

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80 Hall, *Slave Society*, 178–189.

The period after the British occupation of both St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy showed signs of consolidation, growth and material advance by their respective free colored populations. In St. Thomas after 1802, the registers for sea passes included information of shipowner and shipmaster burgher licenses and the so-called free-briefs, which stated the date of manumission or birth. In the years 1803–1807, the share of free colored shipowners stood at 8.6 percent, and the share of shipmasters at 14.6 percent, which indicates that this group also participated directly in the colony's growing merchant community.<sup>81</sup> Civic rights for free colored were discussed from time to time. At the request of the council of St. Barthélemy, the question of civic rights for the free colored, specifically their electability for public service, was debated in Stockholm in 1812. The notion was rejected with explicit reference to the Revolution in Saint-Domingue, arguing that extended civic rights was dangerous, that "such a change would with time result in that all property end up in the hands of the free coloured." In the Danish West Indies, the free colored tried to advance their own rights in the form of the so-called freedman petition of 1816, aspiring for the same civic rights and privileges as the white population. It would take several more years to gain these formal rights, as they were granted in St. Barthélemy in 1822 and 1830 in the Danish West Indies.<sup>82</sup>

When the war had broken out in April 1793, the British government was determined that the trade of the French Caribbean colonies should not be carried in neutral vessels. This led, in turn, to the stopping, searching and sending for adjudication of all suspicious neutral vessels. Much to the dismay of merchants and officials in the neutral free ports, locally registered vessels were affected by a great number of confiscations. Amid the protests, any pretensions of innocence were hard to prove. Swedish officials, for instance, knew too well that "3/4 of our commerce consists of smuggling," and that the majority of smuggling was conducted with the French colonies, "from whence we get our sugar, coffee, cotton, rum, cocoa &c."<sup>83</sup> While the British Orders-in-Council in 1793 were aimed at the economic deprivation of France and its colonies, they were a gross diplomatic miscalculation insofar as they drew heavy protest from the United States, which led to a partial reversal of the Orders-in-Council in the latter part of the 1790s. During much of the French Revolutionary War it was in the interest of the British government to follow a policy more solicitous

81 Udskrift af St. Jan og St. Thomas søpasprotokol, 1788–1807, 365/384, Vestindisk-guinesisk renteskriverkontor, Generaltoldkammeret – Ældre del, DNA.

82 E.O.E. Högström, *S. Barthélemy under svenskt välde* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1888), Hall, *Slave Society*, 175; Thomasson, 6–7.

83 J. Norderling to SWIC, 30 June 1796, Handel och sjöfart, vol. 169, SNA.

to the neutrals than had been customary in previous wars. The Americans, in particular, whose trade with Britain itself was more important than had it had ever been and whose wartime cooperation in the Caribbean was also sought, received differential treatment throughout the war. The Americans had emerged as independent neutral carriers, supplying Caribbean colonies with essential food supplies and other provisions, and remained as key actors and middlemen in the regional trade throughout the French Revolutionary Wars and the Napoleonic Wars. The free ports themselves also drew direct scrutiny from the British. When news reached London about the formation of the League of Armed Neutrality in 1801, the British War Secretary, Henry Dundas, sent secret orders to the military and naval commanders in the Leewards to seize the islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, St. John and St. Barthélemy, and all Danish, Swedish and Russian goods discovered there. The islands were occupied and were only returned after the Treaty of Amiens was signed in 1802.<sup>84</sup>

Despite the toll taken on St. Barthélemy and St. Thomas merchants during the war up until 1802, both by British seizures at sea and the eventual occupation of the colony, the last decade of the eighteenth century was a period of increasing profitability for the island. St. Barthélemy shows the most dramatic transformation during this time. Consisting of negligible sums in 1791, the incomes from port duties and tariffs shot up and hit a high point of over 40,000 Spanish dollars in 1799.<sup>85</sup> The Scandinavian colonies had come to be dominated by resident local merchants, all with nominal Swedish and Danish citizenship, although, in reality, consisting of Frenchmen, Dutchmen, Spaniards, Americans, Englishmen and other nationalities. These merchants bought up incoming cargoes from North America or Europe, bought or chartered the necessary ships, and traded to and from ports in the Caribbean officially closed to foreign traffic.<sup>86</sup> This was the essential arrangement that existed in the free port of St. Barthélemy until the Congress of Vienna in 1814, and in St. Thomas until the British occupation of 1807. The sweeping British conquests of French colonies after 1807 affected the neutral trade considerably, but American shipping

84 Lydia Wahlström, *Sverige och England under revolutionskrigens början: Bidrag till den Reuterholmska regeringens historia* (Stockholm: Norstedt & Söner, 1917), 217–243; Governor Ankarheims reports 21 March 1801, 17 June 1801, 18 July 1801 and 22 July 1802, SBS 1C, SNA.

85 A sum, which roughly would represent about 1 percent of the value of cargoes passing through the island. St Barthélemy account books, 1793–1814, St Barthélemyssamlingen (SBS), vol. 25A–D.

86 Michael Craton, "The Caribbean Vice Admiralty Courts, 1763–1815; Indispensable Agents of an Imperial System" (unpublished PhD diss., McMaster University, 1968), 137–141, 289.

still was vital in holding the illicit trade channels open. St. Barthélemy was one convenient port through which American shipping found an outlet.<sup>87</sup>

The rationale and the need for these free marketplaces, operating on the fringes of a mercantilist framework, had been removed after the return to peace. St. Thomas, on the other hand, continued to develop despite of these events, and maintained its population, although it was occupied by the British in 1807–1815. After the occupation it went through a significant development by becoming a regional coal depot for transatlantic steamers and a station for the Royal Mail packet boats. These facts explain the subsequent demographic development beyond the 1820s.

### Conclusion

Although the damage caused by the British occupation of 1781 was substantial for St. Eustatius, resident merchants nonetheless rebuilt their businesses. Worries about nascent competition from neighboring colonies such as St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy were clearly present, but this only became acute when the WIC decided to introduce a new tariff on imports and exports which suddenly threatened to put the island in a very disadvantaged position. During the early 1790s, exports to the Dutch Republic grew, reaching a post-war peak in 1792. Commercial activity did not move to neighboring competitors, as was initially feared. Many of the merchants that had been active before 1781 remained on the island or returned after a brief absence. Many of the “adventurers” who dominated the Statian community shortly before the arrival of the British left the island and a more stable population was formed, which could effectively use its trading networks that had sometimes been built over generations. One critical component had nevertheless been lost in the previous war: neutrality in international conflicts. Beginning in 1793, the Dutch were involved in two decades of almost continuous warfare. This was the deathblow to Statia’s role as regional market, and, hence, the impetus for emigration from the island.

For St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy, the decline of the Dutch colonies after 1795 had a lasting impact. At the same time as the former competition became phased out, it also contributed to colonial development through immigration. The colonies attracted high numbers of new settlers, among them many former prominent Statians and other former Dutch colonial residents. The same Statian merchants who were active in the post-1781 debate were among the

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87 Ibid., 289, 326–328.



first to move to the Scandinavian colonies and establish themselves as the new elite in their newly adopted societies. However, the majority of migrants were artisans, craftsmen, mariners, workers and slaves, who also followed in the migration waves of the 1790s into St. Thomas and St. Barthélemy, apart from the larger merchant houses whose establishments and property took root in the islands during the same period. The administrations in the receiving colonies saw this phenomenon as having a positive effect, visibly gauged by urban growth and increasing trade activities. Without this influx of capital and people from neighboring colonies, the future of the Scandinavian free ports would undoubtedly have been much different. The prime mover of migration and the subsequent growth of commerce in St. Barthélemy and St. Thomas was inextricably linked to war and conflict, coupled with the benefits of Swedish and Danish neutrality. Circumvention of mercantilist regulation and the evasion of belligerent maritime forces was made possible with Swedish and Danish citizenship in the Caribbean. Moreover, Swedish and Danish citizenship was desirable for newcomers aspiring to support themselves and to prosper, as it conferred advantages in the form of civic rights, favorably low taxes and other costs. Conflict made the free ports convenient marketplaces and attracted merchant capital, but conflict also entailed a high degree of involuntary migration due to the hazards of war. Thus, a large number of migrants came to the island only by accident.

Regional economic and social networks persisted to a large extent, despite changing political realities. The evidence in our contribution suggests a continuity in the transit trade centered around free ports in the Caribbean, as actors from Dutch colonies, St. Eustatius in particular, shifted their commercial operations and family businesses to neutral colonies when circumstances demanded it. The phenomenon of the migration waves of the 1790s were not in any way atypical. The largely heterogeneous and cosmopolitan community of St. Eustatius included a high number of migrants and transients before 1781, and free port colonies were open places where the mobility of people, goods, capital and ideas were defining features of society. The migrations after 1795 and their consequences also testify to the complicated interconnectedness of the region in general, and for the free ports in particular. Distinctive and mutually important connections existed between the Dutch, Danish and Swedish free ports and their inhabitants. These connections became particularly visible during the period 1780–1820, when ports and plantation colonies of the minor Caribbean colonial powers adjusted to the changing realities on both sides of the Atlantic. It also underscores the usefulness of a regional and transnational perspective, which, left unexplored, leaves all of the contacts and interactions as a mere background in a “national Atlantic” perspective.

# Dutch Atlantic Decline during “The Age of Revolutions”

Gert Oostindie

The Age of Revolutions heralded fundamental changes in the Atlantic. The American, Haitian and Latin American revolutions did away with colonialism in most of the Americas, though the Caribbean remained a European stronghold. The British abolition of the slave trade potentially severed the ties between Africa and the Americas and initiated the ending of slavery itself, even if illegal slave trading would continue into the 1860s. The economic ascent of the United States laid the basis for the later political supremacy of the U.S. in the Americas. By 1825, of all the European colonial powers only Great Britain continued to be a serious competitor to the US in the Americas – while simultaneously, this entire period served to broaden the divide between “the West and the rest.”<sup>1</sup>

Like all other European states, the Dutch suffered heavy losses in the process. At the threshold of the Age of Revolutions, the Dutch Atlantic had been far more successful for the Republic than is often assumed, even after the pioneering seventeenth-century “Dutch moment in Atlantic history” – a felicitous phrase coined by Wim Klooster – had passed. Throughout most of the eighteenth century, growth rates of Dutch Atlantic shipping had been superior to domestic economic growth and to most international trades, the Dutch East India Company (VOC, 1602–1795) trade to Asia included. Jan de Vries calculated that whereas Asian imports had been consistently higher ever since the mid-seventeenth century, by 1780 the annual value of Atlantic imports into the Republic surpassed the Asian share.<sup>2</sup> This Atlantic success started to crumble with the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War in the early 1780s. As this chapter will argue,

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1 Wim Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World: A Comparative History* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 88 and *passim*.

2 Jan de Vries, “The Dutch Atlantic Economies,” in *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel*, ed. Peter A. Coclanis (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press), 1–29, 19; and Jan de Vries, “The Limits of Globalization in the Early Modern World,” *The Economic History Review* 63, no. 3 (August 2010): 710–733, 729. For further discussion, see Gert Oostindie and Jessica Vance Roitman, “Repositioning the Dutch in the Atlantic, 1680–1800,” *Itinerario* 36, no. 2 (August 2012): 129–160, 136–139.

the Age of Revolutions, which brought about such radical changes in the rest of the Atlantic, was, in the Dutch domains, a period of slow, yet inexorable, contraction – a contraction that would eventually be the death knell for the Dutch Atlantic as an area of any real significance for either the metropole or for other nations. At the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the confirmation of the late-eighteenth century British takeover of Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo meant that the Dutch lost a plantation frontier. The British returned the rest of the Atlantic colonies, and Suriname became the only remaining Dutch asset economically. Curaçao and St. Eustatius lost their function as free trade zones in a post-mercantilist world. So did Elmina, as the slave trade came to a halt. Dutch Atlantic trade figures would never recover.

The Fourth Anglo-Dutch War of 1780–1784 was the first spectacular episode in the Dutch Atlantic decline, but there was a prelude to that. Previous economic growth in the Dutch Atlantic had been based only partially on production growth in the Dutch Guianas, mainly Suriname. Of growing importance was the transshipment of other nations' plantation produce through Curaçao and St. Eustatius. Dutch Atlantic commerce thrived because merchants from these two islands acted as middlemen in the wider Atlantic. But since the early eighteenth century, British and British North American merchants had started to emulate the Dutch in this role of Atlantic brokers. By the 1780s, they had already quietly displaced the Dutch as prime shippers to and from the Dutch Guianas, and in the next decades, they would displace them in the Caribbean Sea as well.

It seems that few either in the Dutch Republic or in the Dutch Atlantic colonies had anticipated such a decline, but as a result of the devastating maritime blows suffered in the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, an awareness of the extreme vulnerability of the Dutch state, both at home and overseas, did settle in. In fact, this chapter will show that it was the Dutch state's neutrality – a neutrality that was safeguarded or “permitted” by the other Atlantic powers – that had allowed the Dutch to build their niche as intermediaries within the mercantilist system. In the aftermath of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, the Dutch learned the painful lesson that their neutrality only lasted as long as it was condoned by more powerful states. But even before this, the vulnerability of the Dutch Atlantic colonies was foreshadowed. This translated in the 1780s into the rise of the so-called Patriot movement, aiming at reform of the stagnant, semi-monarchal Republic. Over the next decades, “Enlightened” Patriots and conservative “Orangists” – after the Stadtholder's family color – would vie for dominance at home and overseas. As this chapter will go on to argue, it was, time and again, foreign powers who would be decisive for the outcome of these struggles. With every change of regime, there were new hopes in the metropolis of

reinvigorating the Dutch Atlantic, inspired by the conviction that the Caribbean colonies were still vital to the metropolis. It would take until the second half of the nineteenth century before the Dutch economy embarked on a new round of steady growth, and indeed there was a strong colonial dimension to that. But this time unequivocally only the Dutch East Indies mattered.

This chapter charts the development of the Dutch Atlantic in the Age of Revolutions. It will show how the changes that actually mattered in the long-term in the Dutch Atlantic – changes such as abolition, loss of territory, and the diminished brokerage function – did not emerge from either movements within the metropole or from inside the colonies themselves, and especially not from the Creole elite (in stark contrast to so many other colonies in the Americas). Rather, they were externally imposed. The first section focuses on demographic and economic change, and argues that this period was a downward turning point in Dutch Atlantic history. The period was marked by geographical contraction as well as a definitive loss of the islands' broker function in the wider Atlantic, leaving only Suriname as an asset – though this colony too would soon lose its value to the metropolis. The second part of the chapter discusses political and social developments. Whereas outside interventions were crucial, internal political strife or challenges to the slave society as such had little impact except for on Curaçao. But even there, in the end, the only relevant political change was that the colonies came to belong to a Kingdom rather than a Republic, following regime change in the metropolis. Nowhere was there an urge for independence, or even for political reform. Clearly the elites of the Dutch Atlantic thought and acted differently from their peers in the Continental Americas, and similar to the white elites in the rest of the Caribbean. The closing section offers some thoughts on the rise and fall of the Dutch Atlantic as a set of interconnected and externally oriented regional hubs.

### **Economic and Demographic Decline, 1780–1825**

Among the Dutch colonies in the Atlantic, three would demonstrate spectacular growth in the decades after 1780. These were Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo. Their success was mainly the result of massive British and North American involvement, included several British occupations, and climaxed with their formal transition to the British empire. With Trinidad, ceded by the Spanish, British Guiana became the new plantation frontier in the British Atlantic. The performance of Suriname paled in comparison to its neighbor, with population decrease and the value of exports initially growing at a slower

pace and even declining in absolute value from the 1820s onwards. The decay of Curaçao and Statia was even more graphic, with strong population decline because of migration to non-Dutch territories. With only a few dozen Europeans, Elmina had already become an imperial backwater at the eve of the abolition of the slave trade, and would not recover (Figure 12.1).

The demographic development of the Caribbean colonies had been linked primarily to the African slave trade, as net demographic growth continued to be negative throughout the eighteenth century, particularly so in the Guianas. The population decline in Suriname in the 1780–1815 period must be attributed

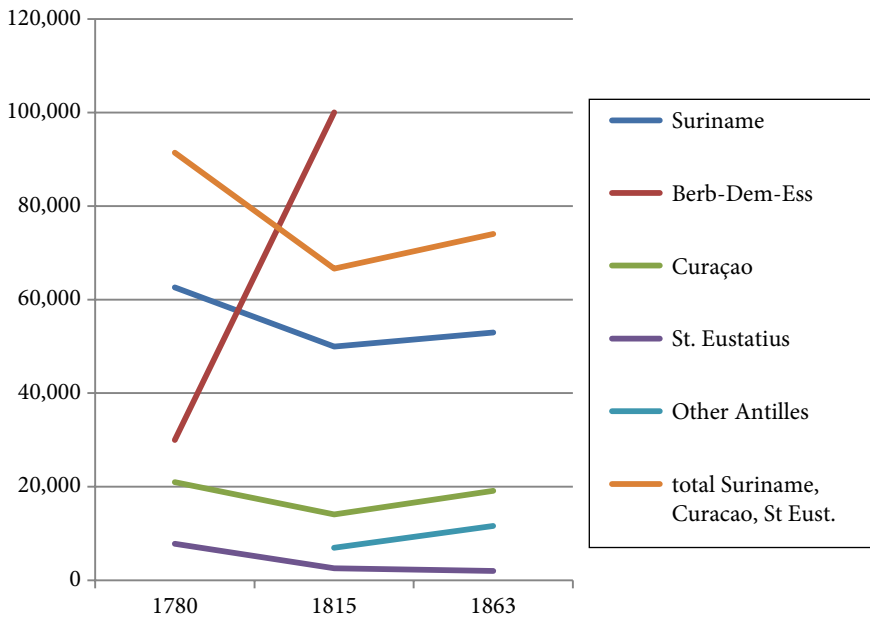


FIGURE 12.1 *Population Figures in the Dutch Atlantic, 1780–1863.*

Excluding Amerindians and maroons.

SOURCES: HANNEKE LOMMERSE, "POPULATION FIGURES," IN *DUTCH COLONIALISM, MIGRATION AND CULTURAL HERITAGE*, ED. GERT OOSTINDIE (LEIDEN: KITLV, 2008), 315–342, 323–334 AND GERT OOSTINDIE, "BRITISH CAPITAL, INDUSTRY AND PERSEVERANCE' VERSUS DUTCH 'OLD SCHOOL': THE DUTCH ATLANTIC AND THE TAKEOVER OF BERBICE, DEMERARA AND ESSEQUIBO, 1750–1815," *BMGN – LOW COUNTRIES HISTORICAL REVIEW* 127, NO. 4 (2012): 28–55, 35. NB: FIGURES FOR ELMINA AND THE NEARBY DUTCH FORTS NOT INCLUDED. INHABITANTS WERE PRIMARILY MILITARY PERSONNEL. IN 1788, THE POPULATION WAS JUST OVER 300, OF WHICH SOME 70 WERE EUROPEANS. IN 1816, THE TOTAL NUMBER WAS DOWN TO 220, OF WHICH ONLY 20 WERE EUROPEANS. ESTIMATES KINDLY PROVIDED BY HISTORIAN HENK DEN HEIJER, WHO IS PREPARING A MONOGRAPH ON ELMINA.

primarily to the collapse of the Dutch slave trade in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. This, in turn, was due to the 1773 financial crisis in Suriname and the consequent withdrawal of credit facilities, as well as the decline of Dutch shipping during and after the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War. Berbice and above all Demerara and Essequibo in contrast benefited from British capital as well as the British illicit slave trade decades before the formal takeover, as British investors rightly perceived that this new plantation frontier promised much higher yields than "depleted" colonies such as Barbados or Antigua.<sup>3</sup>

The contraction of Curaçao and Statia was not primarily due to negative natural demographic growth and a lack of slave imports, but rather to large-scale emigration. For Curaçao, this included all segments of the population, but in uneven proportions. The island's total population shrunk by one-third from some 21,000 in 1791 to 14,000 in 1816. The number of slaves decreased from nearly 13,000 to just over 6700, which is almost half. In contrast, the number of free citizens of color increased by over 20 percent. One may assume that some slaves had moved into that category in this period and others had died, but considerable numbers must have been taken by their owners to other destinations in the Northern Caribbean, particularly St. Thomas, a Danish colony that was able to develop into a flourishing free trade port thanks to not only the slave trade, but to metropolitan neutrality.<sup>4</sup>

Something of the same sort must have happened in St. Eustatius. Its development as a free trade zone for the Northern Atlantic had involved the immigration of merchants from Curaçao, who would have taken their slaves with them. The 1781 ransacking of Statia involved the forced exile of many Europeans, including Jews who were particularly targeted by Admiral George Rodney. There was a short recovery, surely inspired by hopes of restoring the island as a free trade port, with total population reaching an all-time peak of nearly 8000 in 1790. The collapse thereafter was definitive, with the population decreasing with two-thirds between 1790 and 1816 and the white segment by almost 80 percent.<sup>5</sup> A prime migration destination again was St. Thomas.

Ironically then, the two waning Dutch free trade zones lost a considerable part of their population to a competing, equally small free trade port owned by Denmark, an even smaller player in the Caribbean. The key to St. Thomas'

3 Oostindie, "British Capital," 35, 40–43.

4 Wim Klooster, "Subordinate but proud: Curaçao's free blacks and mulattoes in the eighteenth century," *New West Indian Guide* 68, nos. 3–4 (1994): 283–300; Wim Renkema, *Het Curaçaose plantagebedrijf in de negentiende eeuw* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1981), 366–367.

5 Cornelis Christiaan Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in Surinam 1791/5–194* (Assen: Gorcum, 1990), 152–154.

short-term success lay in Danish neutrality during the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War and in the first years of the revolutionary wars (until 1800), but in the long run, as mercantilism waned and was eventually abolished in the decades after 1815, St. Thomas too would decline.<sup>6</sup> But that was still to come. In the late eighteenth century, St. Thomas – since its earliest days a settlement with a strong Dutch presence – hosted not only whites and their slaves from Curaçao, but also free blacks born on that island now working as sailors out of St. Thomas. In 1803, 156 out of 1000 free coloreds in the capital of Charlotte Amalie were born in Curaçao; another 62 hailed from Statia. As late as 1830, a Dutch visitor to the island remarked that, among the non-white population, Papiamentu was widely spoken.<sup>7</sup>

6 Ideologically, mercantilism started to fall into disrepute with Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, but in practice it took a long time before laws derived from this period were repealed. Thus the U.K. abolished the Corn Laws only in 1846 and the Navigation Acts in 1849, while France ended mercantilist regulations during the second empire (1852–1870). See Robert B. Ekelund and Robert D. Tollison, *Politicized Economies: Monarchy, Monopoly, and Mercantilism* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M Press, 1997). The population of St. Thomas continued to grow until the 1840s. See Neville Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1992), 5. The white population included substantial numbers of Jewish settlers, partly hailing from Curaçao and Statia. See Jens Larsen, *Virgin Islands Story: A History of the Lutheran State Church, Other Churches, Slavery, Education, and Culture in the Danish West Indies, now the Virgin Islands* (Philadelphia: Muhlenburg Press, 1950), 152; Mordechai Arbely, *The Jewish Nation of the Caribbean: The Spanish-Portuguese Jewish Settlements in the Caribbean and the Guianas* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2002), 276.

7 David Whitney Knight and Laurette de T. Prime, eds., *St. Thomas 1803: Crossroads of the Diaspora: The 1803 Proceedings and Register of the Free Colored Inhabitants in the Town of Charlotte Amalie, on the Island of St. Thomas in the Danish West Indies* (St. Thomas, U.S.V.: Little Northside Press, 1999), 163. For 522 out of a total of 1521 free coloreds, no place of birth was given. Gerardus Balthazar Bosch, *Reizen in West-Indië* (Amsterdam: Emmering, 1985), 2:366–367; Julius S. Scott, “Crisscrossing Empires: Ships, Sailors, and Resistance in the Lesser Antilles in the Eighteenth Century,” in *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion*, ed. Robert L. Paquette and Stanley Engerman (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1996), 128–143, 133; Cornelis de Jong van Rodenburg, *Reize naar de Caribische Eilanden, in de jaren 1780 en 1781: aan boord van s'Lands schip van oorlog Mars onder bevel van den schout bij nacht Willem Krul* (Haarlem: François Bohn, 1807), 297–298; Justus Gerardus Swaving, *Swaving's reizen en lotgevallendoor hem zelve beschreven* (Dordrecht: Blussé and Van Braam, 1827), 12; J.P. van de Voort, “Dutch Capital in the West Indies during the eighteenth century,” *Acta Historiae Neerlandicae: The Low Countries History yearbook* 14 (1981): 85–105, 94–95; Tim Deahl, “Een vergeten parel op de Deense Kroon: de ontwikkelingen van de Nederlandse connecties met het Deense eiland St. Thomas, 1770–1807,” (unpublished MA thesis, University of Leiden, 2011), 36–37, 53–58.

Demographic decline and economic contraction fed one another. The decade after the conclusion of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1785 to 1795) Suriname produced an unprecedented peak in the combined value of sugar, coffee and cotton, totaling some 10 million Dutch guilders per year. It is impossible to reconstruct the development of plantation exports between 1795 and the early 1800s. The overall value of the exports of these three staples reached a last peak of 10 million guilders in 1815–1819, which possibly explains the optimism about the colony prevailing in Holland at the time. But export value declined steeply afterwards, to a low of 4 million in the 1840s followed by a slight recovery to 4.8 million guilders in the 1850s, followed by further contraction.<sup>8</sup>

Not all products fared the same. From 1815 onwards to Emancipation in 1863 we see a steep growth in sugar exports, compared to a more erratic pattern for cotton and the virtual disappearance of coffee. But even then, the share of Suriname sugar in the Dutch and world markets dwindled. In a globalizing market, of all Caribbean producers only Trinidad, British Guiana and particularly Cuba would continue to matter as the century progressed – but the once dominant Caribbean share in world sugar production was rapidly decreasing anyway, to below a third by 1900.<sup>9</sup> On the Dutch market in 1831, Dutch sugar imports from Suriname were roughly at the same level as its new colonial competitor Java. In 1850, Java exported five times as much sugar to the Netherlands, in 1860 14 times as much.<sup>10</sup> The post-Emancipation introduction of indentured labor would not bring a halt to that relative decline, and alternatives were hard to come by until the twentieth-century development of bauxite mining. Before that, as a desperate Minister of Colonial Affairs, Hendrik Colijn, sighed in Parliament in 1935: "Everything that has been tried in Suriname, it has all simply failed."<sup>11</sup>

Prior to their turn-of-the-century demographic decline, the Antillean islands had never exported much, Curaçao and Statia making fortunes only through re-exports. As North American merchants came to control

8 Alex van Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast: rooibouw en overleven in een Caraïbische plantagekolonie 1750–1863* (Leiden: KITLV, 1993), 437.

9 J.R. Ward, *Poverty and Progress in the Caribbean, 1800–1960* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), 27. The Caribbean share in world sugar production, both cane and beet sugar, was 35 percent in the 1870s, 25 percent in the 1920s, and 14 percent in the 1960s.

10 Van Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast*, 35; Jan Jacob Reesse, *De suikerhandel van Amsterdam van 1813 tot 1894: een bijdrage tot de handelsgeschiedenis des vaderlandshoofdzakelijk uit de archieven verzameld en samengesteld door J.J. Reesse* ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1911), xxxiii, xli.

11 National Archives of the Netherlands, The Hague (NL-HaNA), 2.02.21.01, Verslagen van de Handelingen der Staten-Generaal, 1876–1877, 1939–1948, inv. no. 681–690, *Handelingen Eerste Kamer* 1934–1935, 9 May 1935. Translations from Dutch archives and publications into English are mine throughout this chapter.



intra-Caribbean trade, and as mercantilism was effectively abolished in the nineteenth century, it is only logical that the islands lost their economic function as regional hubs. Once they were applauded by Adam Smith in *Wealth of Nations*, for amassing fortunes in their function of “free ports, open to the ships of all nations,” in an otherwise mercantilist environment. Now, these “barren islands” took the full brunt of the poverty of their natural resources.<sup>12</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century and up to the establishment of oil refineries in Aruba and Curaçao in the 1930s, successive Dutch governors would report on deep poverty, economic stagnation and would consider one plan for economic development after another, all of which would come to naught. In 1901, Member of Parliament H. van Kol, who had made his fortune in the Dutch East Indies, qualified Curaçao and the other Antilles as “a colony in dire straits,” worse off even than in the early nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

Of Elmina, finally, not much may be said. Even prior to the abolition of the slave trade, its function as seat of the Dutch West India Company (WIC) had lost its former importance. Some experiments were made after abolition with cotton and indigo plantations as well as with trade, but to little avail. Between 1831 and 1872, the Dutch recruited local soldiers in Elmina to serve in the colonial army. Partly because this scheme was criticized as an ill-concealed form of semi-bondage, and partly because cheaper alternatives were found in the Indonesian archipelago, this practice was discontinued. By 1872, the Dutch eagerly ceded Elmina to the British in a swap which included confirmation of Dutch control of Northern Sumatra and permission for the Dutch to acquire indentured labor for Suriname in British India.

We should not assume that contemporaries were already anticipating this overall decline of the Dutch Atlantic. During the Age of Revolutions as well as at its conclusion, policy makers voiced optimism in spite of their painful awareness of Dutch decline, or at least the conviction that the Caribbean colonies could play a vital role in the Netherlands regaining the status of a serious world player. Thus in 1795 parliamentarians of the “revolutionary” Batavian Republic were of the opinion that their new state could only survive with the support of its colonies, “in particular those in America.”<sup>14</sup> After the Peace of

12 Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Amsterdam: MetaLibri, 2007), 442.

13 Gert Oostindie, ed., *De gouverneurs van de Nederlandse Antillen sinds 1815* (Leiden: KITLV, 2011); Henri Huber van Kol, *Een noodlijdende kolonie* (Amsterdam: Masereeuw & Bouten, 1901), 1–2.

14 Quoted in T.P.M. de Jong, *De krimpende horizon van de Hollandse kooplieden: Hollands welvaren in het Caribisch zeegebied, 1780–1830* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1966), 124.

Amiens, the Dutch quickly dispatched a large fleet to the Caribbean to restore their sovereignty, investing serious money in the expectation of future rewards. Even as during the Napoleonic Wars almost all Dutch colonies had again been "temporarily" taken over by the British, there was the expectation of their recovery. In an 1806 report written at the request of the recently-appointed King Louis Napoleon, the Dutch Department of Colonies argued that the Atlantic properties, including Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo, were "among the most prominent colonies world-wide." A second memorandum expressed the conviction that these colonies, and the African slave trade, were "indispensable" for Dutch recovery as "a merchant state."<sup>15</sup>

Upon the restart of the country as the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1813, King Willem I hoped to make the colonies work to the benefit of the metropolis, but it would take until the mid-1820s before he could make real progress with his ambitions for state reform including colonial rule. In 1820 the King still nurtured high hopes for his American possessions, in spite of the loss of much of the Guianas, for which, incidentally, Amsterdam merchants blamed him.<sup>16</sup> By 1825, government reports qualified Suriname as "a highly important colony," and "almost the only still flowering branch of trade and shipping for Amsterdam."<sup>17</sup> This was the last optimism to be voiced regarding the Caribbean. In the next decades, it would dawn upon government circles and entrepreneurs alike that the Dutch East Indies were becoming the only part of empire that really mattered. Prompted by Willem I, the state assumed control, with evident success, for the national treasury. Income from the East Indies, mainly derived from the semi-feudal Javanese "Cultivation System," accounted for 32 percent of state income in the 1830s, 53 percent in the 1840s and 45 percent in the 1850s.<sup>18</sup>

### Dutch Colonial Policies in Revolutionary Times

The Dutch Revolt against Habsburg Spain had resulted – somewhat surprisingly even to its protagonists – in the establishment of a Republic, albeit a

15 Memorandums written by civil servant J.C. van der Kemp, 2 September 1806, quoted in J. de Hullu, "1786. Mémoire sur l'isle de Saint-Eustache," in "De handel van St. Eustatius in 1786," *West-Indische Gids* 3, no. 1 (1922): 35–51 and his "De algemeene toestand onzer West-Indische bezittingen in 1806," *West-Indische Gids* 2, no. 1 (1921): 407–421, 413, 419.

16 De Jong, *Krimpende Horizon*, 129, 136.

17 "Uit de pers," *West-Indische Gids* 1 (1919): 496–500.

18 J.L. van Zanden and Arthur van Riel, *Nederland 1780–1914: staat, instituties en economische ontwikkeling* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2000), 223.

republic of a strongly federal character and with a semi-monarchal structure. The “Republic of the Seven United Netherlands” had its center in the province of Holland, but included six more provinces of which Zeeland was most important to overseas trade, particularly in the Atlantic. Sovereignty lay with the States-General, a parliament in which the several provinces were represented in conformity with their demographic and economic clout. Each province had its own council or “Staten.” Amsterdam was the most important player in the “Staten van Holland.” Nevertheless, the seat of government was The Hague, an administrative center in Holland of much lesser economic importance. The most important metropolitan cities in the Dutch Atlantic were Amsterdam, followed by a large margin by Middelburg/Vlissingen in Zeeland and Rotterdam in Holland.

Despite this ostensibly Republican structure, ever since its 1581 proclamation of war against Spain, the Republic had also retained an institutional relationship with the noble family of Oranje-Nassau who intermittently served as a pseudo-monarchy, even if the so-called Stadtholders never had the royal prerogatives usual in *ancien régime* Europe. There was a constant competition between the House of Oranje-Nassau and the *Staten van Holland*, particularly the dominant city of Amsterdam. Between 1581 and the 1790s, there had been two periods in which the Dutch burgher elite ruled the country without the interference of Stadtholders at all, from 1650 to 1672 and again from 1702 to 1747. For the rest of the period, the States General shared their powers with the Stadtholders in an uneasy compromise. As for colonial affairs, the Stadtholders were nominally presiding over the two companies, but in practice their involvement in colonial affairs was limited.

Colonial affairs in the Asia and Southern Africa were relegated to the semi-state VOC.<sup>19</sup> Financed by private means as a chartered company, the VOC was beneficial to the Republic both by the employment and riches it brought to cities and individuals in the Republic and because the company paid various kinds of taxes to the States General. The WIC failed to perform as satisfactorily.<sup>20</sup> The first WIC (1621–1674) faltered after the loss of Brazil and its

19 The VOC built a network of trading posts along the Arabic and South and Southeastern Asian coasts of the Indian Ocean and hence to East Asia, with permanent colonies in Sri Lanka and the Indonesian archipelago. In addition, the VOC founded the Cape Colony in Southern Africa which soon developed into a settler colony. The VOC was a semi-state institution, as the States-General had relegated governance, including military powers, as well as a trade monopoly to the company. For most of the seventeenth and part of the eighteenth centuries, the company performed well and was therefore allowed to continue its mission.

20 Henk den Heijer, *De geöctrooieerde compagnie: de VOC en de WIC als voorlopers van de naamloze vennootschap* (Deventer and Amsterdam: Kluwer and Stichting tot Befordering der Notariële Wetenshcap, 2005), 168–172.

successor, the second WIC (1674–1792), was not financially successful either. The WIC lost its trade monopoly in the 1730s and only wielded direct governance in Elmina and the Antillean islands. Suriname and the lesser Guianas were ruled by corporate associations in which the WIC had a share, at best, as was the case with the "Sociëteit van Suriname." But of course, even if it did not yield the nice dividends to its shareholders that the VOC did, as an institution of governance the WIC was indispensable to the functioning of the Dutch Atlantic and as such had an economic function for the Republic no matter the poor returns paid to its share holders.

Even prior to the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, the Republic had become fragile economically and militarily, and this instability affected colonial affairs as well. But the war acted as a catalyst, with the British sacking of St. Eustatius in 1781 serving as a painful reminder of the vulnerability of Dutch maritime strength. Since the 1713 Peace of Utrecht, the Dutch had performed their role as middlemen in the Atlantic on a basis of neutrality between the larger European rival states. The war demonstrated that this rewarding role could only be performed as long as competitors tolerated this. When the British decided that the Republic's neutrality was no longer convenient, the Dutch found out that they lacked the military means to defend their interests. Unable to protect their own merchant fleet and colonies, their future laid in the hands of the British, and to a lesser extent the other Atlantic states.<sup>21</sup>

This humiliation stimulated the existing misgivings among part of the educated classes against the status quo. Inspired by Enlightenment ideas, a "Patriot" movement had started to organize against the governing aristocratic elite and its leader Stadtholder Willem V in 1781, one year into the war. Not surprisingly, the Patriots sympathized with the American Revolution. In the mid-1780s the Patriots started organizing themselves in militias, and by 1787 there was a genuine Patriot coup. Pro-Orange Prussian intervention, however, prevented regime change and the Patriot leadership had to seek exile in France. Some of the leading Patriots would return in 1794 as members of an armed force supporting revolutionary France's invasion army. In this way, they contributed to the fall of the Dutch Republic and the exile of Stadtholder Willem V to England.

The proclamation of the Batavian Republic in January 1795 signaled both a victory for the Patriots and their absolute dependence on revolutionary France. Internal dissent characterized the Patriot movement, particularly on the issue

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21 Piet Emmer, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Economy, 1580–1880: Trade, Slavery and Emancipation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 219–220.

of the continuation of a federal state, or rather the shift to a unitary state. Moderate factions differed from radical ones in their plans for reform and the implantation of revolutionary projects, but all Patriots were anti-British and pro-French. Their now defeated Orangist opponents were obviously pro-British. The Batavian Republic lasted until 1806, at which point Napoleon Bonaparte decided to turn the country into a dependent “Kingdom of Holland” with his brother Louis Napoleon serving as its first king. In 1810, against his brother’s wish, Napoleon annexed the Netherlands altogether. Three years later, the Anglo-Prussian defeat of France resulted in the establishment of a Kingdom of the Netherlands, with the last Stadtholder’s son appointed as King Willem I.

This long – and at times revolutionary – intermezzo would have crucial consequences for the Netherlands itself, but also for the management of Dutch colonial affairs. First, the semi-state-owned VOC and WIC were dissolved and the direction of the colonies was entrusted to genuine state institutions.<sup>22</sup> With the establishment of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, colonial affairs became a prerogative of King Willem I. Only with the liberal democratic reform of 1848 would the States-General reclaim this authority.

Next, British military interventions narrowed the surface of the Dutch colonial empire. Upon taking up exile in England, Stadtholder Willem V, in the so-called “Kew Letters,” had instructed the overseas officers to admit the troops and ships that would be sent by the British King, “and to consider these as Troops and Ships of a nation that is in friendship and Alliance [with the purpose to] prevent that this Colony will be invaded by the French.”<sup>23</sup> One assumes he did not anticipate that his protectors would not return all possessions after the wars. During the wars, the British indeed took “protective possession” of all Dutch colonies, albeit at different intervals. At the 1814–1815 Peace of Vienna, the United Kingdom returned most Dutch colonies, but retained the Cape Colony, Sri Lanka as well as Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo.

Finally, the Patriot intermezzo yielded a modest harvest of pamphlets addressing colonial affairs and sparked some debate in the new National Assembly about colonial policy, but all this was of limited importance. By the

22 For the Atlantic, this was first the Council of American Possessions and Settlements (1791–1795), next the West India Committee (1795–1800) and finally the Council of American Possessions (1801–1806).

23 Quoted in *Rechtsgeleerd advies in de zaak van den gewezen Stadhouder, en over deszelfs schrijven aan de gouverneurs van de Oost- en West-Indische bezittingen van den Staat*. Door de burgers mr. B.[avius] Voorda en mr. J[ohan] Valckenaer. Ingelevert ter Vergadering der Provisioneele Representanten van het Volk van Holland. op den 7 January 1796 en in 't licht gegeven op last derzelve Vergadering (In den Haag: ter 's Lands Drukkerij van Holland, 1796), 11–12 (University of Leiden Special Collections).

late eighteenth century, the Dutch Republic had ceased to be the intellectual powerhouse, or at least printing house and repository, it had once been, the Dutch printing business having even ceased to be export-oriented, so there was little Dutch contribution to international political or philosophical debates.<sup>24</sup> In the Netherlands as elsewhere – except for a brief period of radicalism in France, including the 1794 abolition of slavery, a law revoked in 1802 – “Enlightened” politicians struggled with the contradiction between high ideals about the equality of men and the economic benefits of colonialism, and eventually concluded that the time was not yet right for ending either colonialism or slavery. As for colonialism as such, a Dutch state commission concluded in 1796 that colonies served “exclusively” for the benefit of the metropolitan economy, and should therefore be “subservient to the Batavian people.”<sup>25</sup>

The issue of slavery was discussed in the National Assembly, with Pieter Vreede, the leader of the radical Patriots, strongly opposing slavery as being incompatible with the Rights of Man. In the ensuing debates considerations of national interest prevailed, and occasional allusions to the Haitian Revolution were used to illustrate that the enslaved Caribbean populations were not quite ready for freedom. The Assembly concluded that the idea of inalienable rights to freedom could not yet be extended to non-European colonial subjects, much less to slaves. The lack of radicalism is further illustrated by the fact that the 1798 Constitution even withheld full citizenship rights from Europeans in the colonies. Surely the earliest revolutionary debates in metropolitan France had reflected more radical thought.<sup>26</sup>

The only real change was in the field of governance and economics. Enlightened thinkers had long criticized mercantilism, with its supposedly stifling monopolies. It was therefore quite logical that the Dutch Patriots were highly critical of the VOC and WIC, as they had been consistently since the 1780s. In the debates leading to the Constitution, the Patriot representatives agreed that neither of the by then ailing companies should be revived. Henceforward, all colonies were simply possessions of the state.<sup>27</sup>

24 Benjamin Schmidt, “The ‘Dutch’ ‘Atlantic’ and the Dubious Case of Frans Post,” in this volume; Margaret C. Jacob and Wijnand W. Mijnhardt, eds., *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century: Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 212–213; Jeremy D. Popkin, “Print Culture in the Netherlands on the Eve of the Revolution,” in *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century*, 273–291, 282.

25 Quoted in Lubbertus Les, *Van Indië onder de Compagnie tot Indië onder de Staat: de koloniale titel in de staatsregeling van 1798* (Utrecht: Oosthoek, 1948), 2, 51.

26 Gerrit Jan Schutte, *De Nederlandse Patriotten en de kolonien: een onderzoek naar hun denkbelden en optreden, 1770–1800* (Groningen: Wolters, 1974), 15–16, 58–59, 144–149, Klooster, *Revolutions*, 98.

27 Schutte, *Nederlandse Patriotten*, 3, 55–56, 90–105, 115, 141.

### Patriots and Orangists in the Caribbean Colonies

The metropolitan conflicts between Patriots and Orangists had repercussions in the Caribbean colonies as they had elsewhere in the Dutch empire. It seems though that such conflicts did not arise before 1795, hence not before the establishment of the Batavian Republic, the Stadtholder's Kew Letters and the intermittent British occupations of Dutch territory. There is no indication that colonial Patriots were interested in undermining colonialism as such, or slavery, the pivotal institution of their colonial societies. Thus, while Jan Bom, a Patriot official to Demerara and Essequibo, characterized the Batavian Republic as a "free" state no longer "in the chains of the Aristocratic and Orange slavery," this did not imply that he disagreed about the fundamentals of slavery in the West Indies. Instead he insisted that he and his fellow Patriots in the colony had demonstrated remarkable zeal in successfully suppressing a "devastating Revolt of the Negro slaves" in 1795.<sup>28</sup>

More plausible then is the assumption that political strife within the Dutch Atlantic colonies was driven at best partly by ideological divides, and more by local idiosyncrasies and interests in which many protagonists demonstrated considerable opportunism. Thus a Dutch-born member of the Curaçao elite, Albert Kikkert, actively participated in the repression of the 1795 slave revolt, next became a vociferous member of the Patriot and, hence, anti-Stadtholder and anti-British faction in local politics. He was consequently expelled after the 1800 British takeover but somehow managed to return to the island in 1816 as the first governor appointed by King Willem I. In his installation speech, he spoke of "the iron yoke of the French invaders," qualified Napoleon as "the worst of tyrants," and his monarch as "a caring father." This type of "weather-vane" conduct was quite characteristic in the context of the successive regime changes in the Netherlands itself too, and ensured a high degree of continuity between the "French" period and the monarchy.<sup>29</sup>

A summary of events in the various colonies during these revolutionary times may illustrate the limited lasting impact of internal political bickering in

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28 On a more personal level, he expressed anger because a private slave had been taken away from him during his travels to Europe. See Jan Bom, *Verslag van Mr. Jan Bom, voorheen secretaries van 't gouvernement der colonie Essequibo en Demerary, enz. Wegens syne en verscheidene burgers...doormengd met eenige reflection, over de oorzaak der overgave van die colonie aan Groot-Brittanie* (Amsterdam: self-published, 1799), 2–4, 17, 38–39.

29 Cited in Wim Renkema, "A. Kikkert," in *De gouverneurs van de Nederlandse Antillen sinds 1815*, ed. Gert Oostinde, 27–32, 27; Cf. Matthijs Lok, *Windvanen: Napoleontische bestuurders in de Nederlandse en Franse Restauratie, (1813–1820)* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2009), 403.

all colonies except for Curaçao. With the symbolic support of the Kew Letters as a convenient justification, the British invaded all but one of the Dutch colonies, but not exactly at the same time. Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo were the first to be taken over by the British, from 1796 to 1802 and then again in 1803, this time indefinitely. Suriname was British from 1799 to 1802 and again from 1804 to 1816, Curaçao from 1800 to 1803 and again from 1807 to 1816, Statia from 1801 to 1802 and from 1810 to 1816. Only Elmina remained nominally Dutch throughout this period – an indication of the colony's insignificance, but nonetheless remarkable in view of its potential role in the Atlantic slave trade, made clandestine for the Dutch too after the British abolition in 1807.

There is an interesting pattern here. In the Atlantic, the colonies that eventually would not be returned – Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo – were the first to be occupied. Exactly the same transpired in the domain of the *voc*. Thus the British took over governance of the Indonesian archipelago late and only for a short period (1811 to 1816), while they intervened earlier in the colonies that they would eventually retain – the Cape Colony (1795 to 1803 and again from 1806), Sri Lanka (ever since 1796) and Malacca (1795 to 1818 and again since 1825). In a sense, then, the entire period of regime changes and warfare in Europe provided Great Britain with convenient arguments to expand its empire. It is not surprising that the British West Indian interest in the metropolis – as well as local British planters and merchants in Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo – had applauded the earlier but short-lived takeover of the colonies in 1780 and, after 1796, thought of the Peace of Amiens (1802) as an annoying obstacle in their design to retain these promising plantation frontiers permanently.<sup>30</sup>

At the eve of the establishment of the Patriot Batavian Republic, the white elite of Suriname arguably identified more with the metropolis than did either the lesser Guianas, with their robust British and American community and connections, or Curaçao and Statia with their traditionally stronger regional rather than transatlantic orientations. We may also assume that after the French and particularly the Haitian Revolutions, there was deep concern about the establishment of a possibly revolutionary Batavian Republic. News that the French National Convention had abolished slavery was received in December 1793 with deep concern, as the slaves in Suriname might be inspired to rebel. Slave unrest remained limited though.

In March 1795 Governor Friderici organized the usual celebrations for the Stadtholder's birthday. But shortly after, the Kew Letters arrived and the governor and his Colonial Council had to make up their minds about what

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30 Oostindie, "British Capital," 48.



course of action to follow. Surprisingly, Friderici and his predominantly Orangist council decided to ward off a “protective” British takeover in spite of the Stadtholder’s instructions. The British reacted by establishing a maritime blockade until they attacked in August 1799. The conditions of capitulation included a clause regarding a possible permanent transition to British sovereignty.<sup>31</sup> With a short intermezzo following the Peace of Amiens, Suriname would remain British until 1816. The British intervention would have one unexpected and, among the planter class, most unwelcome outcome, which was the abolition of the slave trade, a seminal measure that was confirmed in the 1814 treaties.

How do we account for the initial resistance among the Suriname elite to surrender to the British? Surely there was no interest in revolutionary ideas, hence no sympathy for France – even if the Batavian Republic was recognized, the Colonial Council forbade public debates on “French” issues such as the Rights of Man. This ban must have been inspired by fears of a spilling over of revolutionary ideas from Saint-Domingue or, more close by, the colony of Cayenne.<sup>32</sup> And no one anticipated that the British intervention would end with the imposition of the ending of the slave trade. Perhaps, therefore, the initial refusal to follow the Stadtholder’s instructions to welcome the British may be understood as a reflection of the emergence over the preceding century of a white, originally quite diverse, Creole community defining itself both as part of the Dutch empire and as a legitimate defender of local economic and political rights and therefore wary of any permanent change of imperial affiliation that might adversely affect their local interests.

This confident attitude may be illustrated by referring to the *Essai historique* published in 1788 in Paramaribo by “a group of learned Jewish men” headed by David Nassy. Throughout the book the authors emphasized both their gratitude for having been allowed to live as Sephardim in the colony since its earliest days, and the crucial Jewish contributions to the development of Suriname. A deep loyalty pervades the book, starting with the opening dedication thanking the directors of the Sociëteit van Suriname “for living under the laws of the Republic of the United Dutch Provinces, and under your protection.” But this did not keep Nassy from requesting a lowering of taxes and allowance of free trade. This is a refrain uttered throughout the colony’s history by gentile settlers as well, no matter how divided among themselves they may have been on

31 Julien Wolbers, *Geschiedenis van Suriname* (Amsterdam: De Hoogh, 1861), 445, 455–457, 476, 484–485.

32 Wolbers, *Geschiedenis*, 463–464, Goslinga, *Dutch in the Caribbean and in Surinam*, 164.

scores of issues, including religious divides and bigotry in spite of toleration, as contemporary judge Adriaan Lammens wrote.<sup>33</sup>

The British took over Suriname anyway. For the local business community this would have the adverse long-term consequence of the ending of the slave trade, but some positive short-term effects. The British *intermezzo* meant that no ships could be sent to French-controlled Holland, no debts paid off, and hence an accumulation of local wealth. In addition, there was unrestricted trade to North America and within the British Atlantic and, therefore, Suriname partook in the advantages of the British market and the West Indies lobby in the metropolis. But even then, this did not translate to a widespread longing to remain within the British fold. Only the planters of Nickerie, the most Western part of the colony and hence adjacent to Berbice, urged, in vain, for inclusion in what was to become the new colony of British Guiana. But then again, these planters were mainly British nationals to begin with.<sup>34</sup>

The contrast with Berbice and particularly Demerara and Essequibo is evident. In the second half of the eighteenth century, British interest and presence in these colonies had been rapidly growing, and with Statia, these colonies had already been briefly occupied in 1780 during the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War. This episode lasted only a few months, but a letter from 76 British resident planters may have alerted the Crown to this new frontier. The supplicants advised their King not to return these "little known" colonies to the Dutch, as they provided great opportunities. "[As] part of your Majesty's dominions," they argued, these colonies "would be equal to or rather exceed your Majesty's most flourishing settlements in the West Indies."<sup>35</sup> The colony was returned nonetheless, but the informal British takeover continued and was even applauded, naively so in retrospect. Thus a 1790 report commissioned by the

33 David Nassy, *Geschiedenis der kolonie van Suriname: behelzende derzelver opkomst, voortgang, burgerlyke en staatkundige gesteldheid, tegenwoordigen staat van koophandel, en eene volledige en naauwkeurige beschryving van het land, de zeden en gebruiken der ingezetenen* 2 vols., (Amsterdam: Allart en Van der Plaats, 1791), 1: 1, 2: 32–34. Adriaan François Lammens, *Bijdragen tot de kennis van de kolonie Suriname: dat gedeelte van Guiana hetwelk bij tractaat ten jare 1815 aan het Koninkrijk Holland is verbleven, tijdvak 1816 tot 1822: eerste afdeling Geographie, statistica, zeden en gewoonten: vierde afdeling Voornamen belangen der kolonie* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 1982), 56; cf. G.W. van der Meiden, *Betwist bestuur: de eerste bestuurlijke ruzies in Suriname 1651–1753* (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 2008).

34 Goslinga, *Dutch in the Caribbean and in Surinam*, 180.

35 Letter of 76 British settlers in Essequibo and Demerara to George III [early 1781]; NL-HaNA, Second West India Company (further NWIC) 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 533, fols 441–449.

States-General argued that further immigration of “planters from Barbados, Grenada and other isles, leaving their depleted lands” would make the colony flourish to the benefit of the Dutch metropolis. At the same time, the report complained of massive illegal slave imports by and for British nationals.<sup>36</sup>

Shortly after the establishment of the Batavian Republic, and in accordance with the Kew Letters, a British fleet sailed to the Guianas to assume protective custody against France. This offer was initially refused, against the judgement of the Orangist Governor Willem August van Sirtema Van Grovestins, who secretly left the colony on a British ship. His successor, Antony Beaujon, would turn over the colony a year later to the British anyway.<sup>37</sup> British Atlantic investors must have applauded this. A delegation of local residents had already requested the government in Barbados to intervene, and with the British fleet came, as a contemporary wrote, “a great number of speculators” ready to invest their capital in this new frontier, hence it was “more like a country resumed, than ceded, to England.” Indeed, around 1800, two-thirds of the white population of Demerara was estimated to be British, while the rest were a cosmopolitan mix including, in addition to the Dutch, many other European nationalities.<sup>38</sup>

The position of the British settlers need not surprise us, but what of the loyalties of the local Dutch population in Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo? It appears that there was more internal friction than in Suriname, and we may assume that this reflected a concern among at least some of the Dutch settlers that this was not primarily a struggle over political ideas but rather a hard-nosed competition over the possession of valuable territory. Thus the above-quoted former local official and fierce Patriot Jan Bom blamed not only the vile British for the 1796 takeover, but equally the “egoism” of “corrupt” local Dutch, including the “perfidious” Governors Van Grovestins and Beaujon. In vain had the Patriots attempted to protect the colony from the “vile and cowardly means of [British] treachery and bribery.” Bom bitterly concluded that the Orangists had joined in “the triumph of the English settlers.” He was convinced that the

36 Henry Bolingbroke, *A voyage to the Demerary, containing a statistical account of the settlements there, and of those on the Essequibo, the Berbice, and the other contiguous rivers of Guyana* (London: Phillips, 1807), 176–177, 209–210, 370. “Rapport aan zyn Doorlugtigste Hoogheid den Heere Prince van Orange & Nassau [...] naar de Colonien van den Staat in de West-Indien,” by W.A. van Sirtema van Grovestins and W.C. Boeij, 27 July 1790 NL-HaNA, NWIC 1.05.01.02, inv. no. 915, fol. 38–41, 96.

37 Jan Wagenaar, *Vaderlandsche historie, vervattende de geschiedenissen der nu Vereenigde Nederlanden, inzonderheid die van Holland, van de vroegste tyden af* (Amsterdam: Isaak Tirion, 1751), 33: 220–228.

38 Bolingbroke, *Voyage*, 50 (figures ca. 1800), 277–278, 312–313.

British would not return the colony at all, which they had hoped to add to their empire ever since the early 1780s.<sup>39</sup>

Calculating Dutch settlers may have shifted their allegiances out of pure opportunism. There was always the concern that local conflicts could spark slave rebellions following "the terrible example of the French islands."<sup>40</sup> A transfer of sovereignty may also have rescued indebted planters from paying their debts, as a cynical commentator had already remarked in the Patriot newsletter *De Post van den Neder-Rhijn*, in reference to the quick surrender of Demerara to the British in 1781.<sup>41</sup>

Upon their return in 1803, the British initially dealt cautiously with Dutch sensitivities, allowing the pro-British Dutch Governors Antony Beaujon and Abraham van Imbyze van Batenburg to serve as lieutenant-governors under the new British governor.<sup>42</sup> Born in St. Eustatius, Beaujon came from a family of merchants settled in both Curaçao and Statia and was a rare example of family interconnectedness within the Dutch West Indies. A Patriot settler accused him of having no loyalty, "no heart for Patria," of being "a Foreigner, intruding in the Colony without the least interest in the public cause."<sup>43</sup> Perhaps we may indeed qualify Beaujon's maneuvering as sheer opportunism, but then again, by 1800 "national" loyalties were less defined and stable than they would be a century later. Meanwhile the British resolve was clear. A Dutch visitor observed that by 1810 the Dutch settlers had only second-class status, while in 1840, the colony's European population was mainly English, "very few of the former Dutch settlers having remained in the colony."<sup>44</sup>

There is little indication of Patriot versus Orangist strife in St. Eustatius. Both Statia and the adjacent Dutch colonies of St. Maarten and Saba were at the mercy of the British and French. This had first become clear in 1781 with Rodney's sacking of Statia and the subsequent three years of French occupation. In 1793, at the outbreak of the war between the French and the British,

39 Bom, *Verslag*, 1, 5, 7–10, 17–18, 22–23, 46–48.

40 J.C. Delacoste, *Geschiedkundig en waar verhaal der gebeurtenissen, welke in de colonie Demerary by en zedert het vertrek van den baron van Grovestins hebben plaats gehad* (The Hague: H.C. Susan, 1798), 91–93.

41 Oostindie, "British Capital," 48.

42 Pieter Marinus Netscher, *Geschiedenis van de koloniën Essequibo, Demerary en Berbice, van de bestiging der Nederlanders aldaar top op onzen tijd* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1888), 285–287.

43 Delacoste, *Geschiedkundig en waar verhaal*, 41.

44 Swaving, *Swaving's reizen*, 191–193, Robert Hermann Schomburgk, *A Description of British Guiana, Geographical and Statistical: Exhibiting its Resources and Capabilities, Together with the Present and Future Condition and Prospects of the Colony* (London: Cass, 1970), 42.

Dutch settlers had claimed the French part of St. Maarten, but two years later, the French took over all of the three Dutch Windward Antilles. The British, in turn, ousted the French in 1801, returned the islands to the Dutch after the Peace of Amiens, and resumed control in 1810 for another three years. In 1816, the three islands' combined populations had been reduced to half that of 1790, and over the next century and a half this figure would remain that low.<sup>45</sup> We may assume that rather than worrying about political positions, the more enterprising settlers simply left during the Age of Revolutions, taking their slaves with them.

While Curaçao had a similar drastic reduction of its population, this island did experience significant political turmoil in the first five years of the revolutionary period. Patriot versus Orangist strife, combined with successive outside interventions, led to a potentially revolutionary regime change in the period from 1795 to 1800, after which a combined British-American intervention secured the isolation of Curaçao from the Batavian Republic and revolutionary France. Thereafter internal factionalism ceased to matter, as French-leaning Patriotism was no longer tolerated.

The history of the six revolutionary years is quite complicated.<sup>46</sup> As in all Dutch colonies, the proclamation of the Batavian Republic and the conflicting instructions of the exiled Stadtholder forced the governing elite to profess loyalty one way or another. The news of the Batavian Republic reached Curaçao in May, 1795. The next year, the hesitant Governor Johannes de Veer was replaced in a local coup by Jan Jacob Beaujon, a member of the same Dutch Antillean merchant family that produced the pro-English governor who took over governance in Essequibo that same year. Beaujon in turn was replaced in 1796 by a local merchant of Swiss origins, Johann Rudolf Lauffer, again a man officially serving the pro-French Batavian Republic but nurturing no revolutionary feelings whatsoever. Small wonder then that Lauffer would be allowed to continue as governor after the British takeover in 1800. The remaining period up to the establishment of the Kingdom of the Netherlands saw two more changes in sovereignty (from British to Batavian in 1803, back to British in 1807), but none of these responded to a local political dynamic. French and British moves were decisive.

45 Goslinga, *Dutch in the Caribbean and in Surinam*, 154. The population of Statia declined from 7830 to 2591, St. Maarten from 5571 to 3559 and on Saba from 1301 to 1145, hence, in total from 14,702 to 7295. In 1960, the combined population stood at 4722. See Lommerse, "Population Figures," 334.

46 See Wim Klooster and Gert Oostindie, eds., *Curaçao in the Age of Revolutions, 1795–1800* (Leiden: KITLV, 2011) for detailed analyses.

This had been quite different before.<sup>47</sup> Clearly there was some local sympathy on the island for the French Revolution, to the point that the government banned the singing of French revolutionary songs in 1789. By 1793 the governor also issued a ban on public criticism of the House of Orange. News of the establishment of the Batavian Republic intensified local strife in 1795, pitting Patriots and Orangists against one another. In August, the island experienced its biggest slave revolt ever, clearly inspired by the French and Haitians Revolutions. The ranks were immediately closed and the revolt was violently suppressed by a coalition including not only the white population, but equally the (separate) militias made up of black and "colored" freemen.

In the summer of 1796, the Batavian Republic sent an envoy to ensure the island's loyalty. Pressed to choose, the Orangist Governor de Veer refused to take the oath of loyalty to the republic and was consequently replaced by Beaujon. To Patriot dismay, the latter turned out to be Orange-leaning as well. This caused renewed factional strife between local Patriots and Orangists and ended in a coup d'état in which Lauffer took Beaujon's position, in December 1796. His appointment was made public in a declaration opening with the French revolutionary slogan "Freedom, Equality, Fraternity."<sup>48</sup> Yet Lauffer was no radical either. He had been one of the leading figures in a moderate Patriot movement demanding economic reform benefitting the local merchant class, but he nurtured no radical ideas. Once in power as a "Batavian," and hence officially a pro-French governor, his policy was to repress more radical Patriots and to keep the revolutionary French troops out of the island as much as possible. In the next years, he attempted to steer a middle course in the long-standing Anglo-French belligerence as well as in the "Quasi-War" fought between his assertive French allies and the United States. His only real interest in this was the defense of Curaçao's commercial interests – more radical ideas, particularly about slavery, were not relevant either to the local elites or to the three competing nations.

All of this climaxed when in 1800 predominantly black French troops from Guadeloupe landed on the island to preempt a possible British attack. Conspiracies involving local French revolutionary agents had precluded this dramatic episode – though it seems likely that their "revolutionary" fervor

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47 The following is based on Karwan Fatah-Black, "The Patriot Coup d'État in Curaçao, 1796," in *Curaçao in the Age of Revolutions*, ed. Wim Klooster and Gert Oostindie, 123–140 and Han Jordaan, "Patriots, Privateers and International Politics: The Myth of the Conspiracy of Jean Baptiste Tierce Cadet," in *Curaçao in the Age of Revolutions*, ed. Wim Klooster and Gert Oostindie, 141–170.

48 Fatah-Black, "The Patriot Coup d'État," 137.

had more to do with French geopolitical interest than with ideals about slave liberation and links to revolutionary Haiti.<sup>49</sup> In this decisive conjuncture Lauffer, in spite of his self-portrayal as a man inspired by the French Enlightenment *philosophes*, had no qualms about seeking American and British protection against France. This explains why the British allowed him to continue as civilian governor after they had ousted the French and annexed the island.

### Creole Triumphalism?

If we are to understand “Creole Triumphalism,” a concept applied by Bernard Bailyn to Latin as well as British America, as the pulsating circulation of revolutionary, anticolonial ideas leading to regime change, there is nothing in Dutch Atlantic history that comes close.<sup>50</sup> Nowhere did local white elites strive towards independence, and choices made in the Patriot versus Orange, pro-French versus pro-British dilemma were dictated by personal, or, at best, by local merchant and planter interests. Pragmatism or sheer opportunism prevailed. Within the margins dictated by the metropolis, everyday politics were made by Dutch and other European settlers in the colonies, and they embodied no revolutionary fervor at all in this Age of Revolutions. There was no striving for independence, no lasting urge for political reform, let alone social change. At the end of the Napoleonic Wars, local elites in the restored colonies – if they had not left for better shores outside of the Dutch realm – simply accepted the new realities, welcomed the governors now appointed by a real king, had to accept the abolition of the slave trade imposed by the British, and had no qualms about slavery and socio-racial hierarchies. In some of this they diverted from the European elites in British North America and Latin America, but not at all from their peers in the rest of the Caribbean.

Of course, the majority in the Dutch Atlantic were not Europeans but enslaved Africans and their offspring, whether slave or free. Even if we are fully aware of Alison Games’ dictum that “the most urgent and immediate challenge [in Atlantic history] is to restore Africa to the Atlantic,” it remains hard to highlight African agency as a decisive factor on either side of the ocean during

49 Jordaen, “Patriots,” 166–167.

50 Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 101, 104–105. See also John Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492–1830* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 329.

this entire period, for the Dutch Atlantic that is.<sup>51</sup> Elmina hardly figured any more because of European wars and abolitionist legislation. As for the Dutch Caribbean, surely enslaved Africans and their offspring did not emerge triumphantly from the Age of Revolutions.

But then again, there were some attempts. As elsewhere in the wider Caribbean, news of the Haitian Revolution did reach the enslaved populations of the Dutch colonies. The massive 1795 slave revolt of Curaçao – involving 2000 of the island's 12,000 slaves – was among the largest of contemporary revolts in the wider Atlantic and was evidently inspired by the French and Haitian Revolutions. Thus, the revolt's leader, Tula, emphasized the equality of all men as they all originated from Adam and Eve, and reportedly declared: "we seek our freedom, the French [Caribbean] blacks have been given their freedom, Holland has been taken over by the French, hence we must be free."<sup>52</sup> The 1800 French invasion of the island found support among the local enslaved population, but the invasion foundered and again there were no rewards for the slaves.<sup>53</sup> Slavery in Curaçao and the other Dutch Antilles would not be abolished until 1863.

It is likely that the news of the Haitian Revolution reached the enslaved populations of the Guianas as well. A merchant in Rotterdam, writing about this "terrifying news," shared with his agent in Paramaribo his hopes that the necessary vigilance would quell any "spirit of rebellion among the negroes" in Suriname. It is not clear whether more than the routine type of repression was needed during these years. The Dutch Guianas had a long tradition of slave revolts and particularly marronage, and the last "Boni" Maroon War (1789–1793) had just been concluded. In the next period, only a few minor slave revolts were recorded, and these came to naught even if there was some quite unusual participation of free black troops or maroons.<sup>54</sup> In Suriname too, slavery would persist until 1863, with an extension of another ten years under the period of "Staatstoezicht" modeled after the British West Indian period of apprenticeship.

51 Alison Games, "Atlantic History: definitions, challenges and opportunities," *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (June 2006): 741–757, 754.

52 Quoted in Gert Oostindie, "Slave Resistance, Colour Lines, and the Impact of the French and Haitian Revolutions in Curaçao," in *Curaçao in the Age of Revolutions*, ed. Wim Klooster and Gert Oostindie, 1–22, 9. For a comparative perspective, see David Geggus, "Slave Rebellion During the Age of Revolution," in *Curaçao in the Age of Revolutions*, ed. Wim Klooster and Gert Oostindie, 23–56.

53 Jordaen, "Patriots," 144, 166.

54 J.W. Hudig, Rotterdam, 10 November 1791, quoted in Gert Oostindie, *Roosenburg en Mon Bijou: Twee Surinaamse plantages, 1720–1870* (Leiden: KITLV, 1989), 362; Wolbers, *Geschiedenis*, 464, 547–551; Goslinga, *Dutch in the Caribbean and in Surinam*, 175–176.



In contrast, this period did have repercussions for the free non-white population. First, this is a matter of figures. The proportion of the “free coloreds” in the total population of Curaçao doubled between 1789 and 1816. There are no similar figures available for Suriname, but as the share of the total free population tripled between 1774 and 1813, we may well assume that the proportion of non-white free segment increased considerably as well. Thus in both cases, the absolute number of free non-whites increased while the overall population contracted.<sup>55</sup> We might assume that the growth of this group opened avenues for upward social mobility for at least some of its members, particularly in the economic sphere, even if the color line would remain divisive well into the nineteenth century and indeed beyond.

Curaçao stands apart from the other Dutch colonies as to the importance of its free non-white population. Long before French revolutionary ideas about equality landed in the Caribbean, whites on the island had worried about what they perceived as the unacceptable arrogance of the free non-white population, a concern no doubt fed by the growing numbers of this segment. Manumission rates were high, resulting in a large non-white, predominantly Catholic, free population mainly living in Willemstad. By 1740 two-thirds of all mariners in town were non-whites. Most were poor, but Governor Rodier reported in 1769 that some 100 out of this group owned one or two slaves. In the later eighteenth century, while their numbers kept growing, white complaints were voiced about the group’s supposed arrogance, more taxes were levied, and discriminatory legislation enforced.<sup>56</sup> A 1789 report on the Dutch West Indian colonies argued that the non-white population of Curaçao had a reputation for being recalcitrant. Three decades later, another visitor observed that in comparison to Suriname, whites treated the free colored population with considerable more “denigration” – one is tempted to assume that this reflected a longing to create distance from a group that was constantly growing in size and clout.<sup>57</sup>

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55 Curaçao: 3714 (17.6 percent) in 1789 to 4549 (32.3 percent) in 1816. Suriname: from 2671 (17.6 percent) in 1789 to 6104 (12.2 percent) in 1816. See Hanneke Lommerse, “Population Figures,” in *Dutch Colonialism, Migration and Cultural Heritage*, ed. Gert Oostindie (Leiden: KITLV, 2008), 315–342, 326, 331–332.

56 Han Jordaan, *Slavernij en vrijheid op Curaçao: de dynamiek van een achttiende-eeuws Atlantisch handelsknooppunt* (unpublished PhD diss., University of Leiden, 2011), *passim*, Klooster, “Subordinate but Proud,” 286–290, 295.

57 Commissioners W.A. Grovestins and W.C. Boeij (1789) and Reverend G.B. Bosch, cited in Gert Oostindie, *Paradise Overseas: The Dutch Caribbean – Colonialism and Its Transatlantic Legacies* (Warwick: Warwick University Press, 2006), 38–39.

So on Curaçao there was indeed considerable non-white population agency and consequently serious white concern. There is no doubt that revolutionary news spread fast to the entire population precisely because of the mobility of the free blacks and "coloreds" in the wider region. But this did not imply that there was a concerted effort by the entire non-white population, whether free or enslaved, for regime change and the ending of slavery. On the contrary, non-white militias were instrumental in suppressing both the 1750 and 1795 slave revolts and in the turbulent 1796–1800 years; again, there was no consistent solidarity among the non-white population.<sup>58</sup>

This brings us to the conclusion that for the Dutch Atlantic colonies, apart from the loss of the "lesser" Guianas, the only crucial and lasting change was the abolition of the slave trade, imposed by the British who emerged dominant from this entire period. There has been much discussion about the role the Haitian Revolution and slave resistance more generally played in the trajectory leading up to the abolition of the trade, and next, of slavery itself. Whatever the conclusions one would want to draw from this general debate, there is no indication that events in the Dutch Atlantic speeded up this process. Nowhere within the Dutch Atlantic did local elites vie for an end to the slave trade or slavery itself. The one major revolt (Curaçao, 1795) had no impact on debates on colonialism or slavery in the Netherlands, where abolitionism was – perhaps surprisingly<sup>59</sup> – absent or at best weak. In the end, and much to the chagrin of the Dutch West Indian interest on both sides of the Atlantic, Britain simply extended the abolition to the occupied Dutch colonies after debates on the ending of the British trade in which Dutch concerns had not figured.

Indirectly, abolition did have a bearing on the social and cultural development of the Dutch colonies and their majorities of African descent. The ending of the slave trade implied not only that the process of demographic and hence cultural creolization sped up, but equally that the bargaining power of the enslaved population increased. In Suriname, this involved state-controlled amelioration policies as well the admission of Christian missionaries to the plantations, where slave owners, unlike their counterparts in the Antilles, had long thought of Christianization as pearls before swine and potentially

58 Jordaen, *Slavernij en vrijheid*, 278–279, 260–261; Klooster, "Subordinate but Proud," 294; Oostindie, "Slave Resistance," 15–18.

59 Seymour Drescher, "The long good-bye: Dutch capitalism and antislavery in comparative perspective," in *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion*, ed. Robert Paquette and Stanley Engerman (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1996), 345–367.

disruptive for the slavery regime.<sup>60</sup> As the link to Africa was definitely severed, oral traditions maintained spiritual links across the Atlantic, but culture-building became even more a locally and regionally rooted process than it had been before.<sup>61</sup>

### Contraction in Revolutionary Times

For the Dutch Atlantic, the period roughly spanning from the outbreak of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War to the end of the Napoleonic Wars came down to over three decades of economic and political contraction, without regime change and with only subtle, long-range cultural change sparked by the externally imposed abolition of the slave trade. The revisionist argument of this book is that the significance of the Dutch Atlantic to the early modern wider Atlantic has been systematically underestimated in the historiography of the past decades. But we can only conclude that the Age of Revolutions did ring the death knell for the Dutch Atlantic, both as an imperial entity with economic significance for the metropolis and as a web of serious entanglement with the wider tricontinental Atlantic.

The explanation of this decline is simple. If, economically, the Dutch Atlantic had been an asset to the metropolis, this was to a large extent because the Republic, by scale and military and naval power no match for the major Atlantic players, had used its neutrality to build a niche as a broker greasing the prevalent system of mercantilism. The years from 1780 to 1815 taught the Dutch that a weak state's neutrality lasts only as long as larger states condone it. Post-1815, in the emerging post-mercantile Atlantic, there was no longer a need for trade zones such as Curaçao or Statia at all, and no need for illicit connections at the margins of mercantilism, so the very issue of neutrality became insignificant. After the loss of the lesser Guianas, this left the Dutch with only Suriname as a potential asset, but this colony had declining comparative advantages in a quickly globalizing market for plantation produce.

On closer inspection, the Dutch role as an Atlantic broker operating from a range of regional hubs was already undermined in the previous period.

60 Oostindie, *Roosenburg*, 137–138, 188–192 and *Paradise Overseas*, 31–35, Van Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast*, 369–407.

61 For a broader perspective on culture-making in the “Black Atlantic,” see Sidney Wilfred Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976); and John Thornton, *A Cultural History of the Atlantic World, 1250–1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Merchant ships outfitted in the North American colonies were increasingly active in the trade with the Caribbean, to the extent that as early as 1713 a merchant commenting on American trade to the French islands had remarked that the Americans were taking over a role hitherto played by the Dutch.<sup>62</sup> That observation may have been premature, but indeed North American shipping was on the rise and had even become crucial to the Guianas in the same period. After the American Revolution the nation's mercantile expansion in the Caribbean accelerated. Throughout the eighteenth century, British and British West Indian investments, shipping and migrations had an increasing impact as well, culminating in the takeover of what was to become British Guiana.

In this context of decreasing significance in the Atlantic, what changes did the major Dutch actors aspire to, whether in the metropolis or in the colonies? The imperfect monopolies of the West Indian companies were challenged and broken, eventually giving way to direct state control of colonial affairs. The colonial elites had no interest in anything more radical, surely not in independence and not even in a concerted effort to ensure political representation. Much less was there an abolitionist drive, on either side of the Atlantic. Colonials in the Dutch orbit were hardly inspired by the American, French or Latin American Revolutions and positively abhorred the far more radical Haitian Revolution.

So the changes that really mattered – abolition, geographical contraction, loss of broker function – were all externally imposed and grudgingly taken for granted in the Netherlands and among the local elites in the colonies. Slavery remained the key institution in the Dutch Atlantic and all considerations of those in charge departed from their concern about a social order constantly tested by the enslaved. The enslaved population had not been a direct party in the changes taking place between 1780 and 1815, but was at least entering the final, post-abolition phase of slavery, a period of intense creolization. The intermediate group of free men and women of (partly) African origins gained considerably in numbers in the period since 1780, and at least in Curaçao developed a political presence to be reckoned with. But ultimately the gradual and unfinished emancipation of the non-white majorities under the Kingdom of the Netherlands would be accomplished in the context of progressive marginalization of the Dutch Atlantic colonies.

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62 Quoted in Christian Koot, "Anglo-Dutch Trade," in this volume.



## SECTION 5

### *Perspectives on the Dutch Atlantic*





# The Rise and Decline of the Dutch Atlantic, 1600–1800

Pieter C. Emmer

## Introduction

The Dutch Republic has sometimes been coined “a miracle.” It stood out among the nations of the world because of its large trading empire in Europe, Asia and the Atlantic. Around 1650, the Dutch share in world trade might well have been larger than that of any other nation in Europe and, indeed, in the world. Over time, however, the Dutch were surpassed by their rivals, notably Britain and France, countries with more people and money in addition to their superior military and naval might. In retrospect, it seems a miracle indeed that the Dutch were able to build such a large trade network considering the relatively small size of the Dutch population and its limited resources.

In the past decades, however, the duration of the primacy of Dutch trade in the Atlantic has been questioned. It now seems that the trade between the Atlantic powers in Europe with their respective colonies was mainly in the hands of the national merchant communities, that the Dutch were able to break through these national barriers, but were driven out earlier than previously has been assumed, even in those areas of the Atlantic where protective legislation did not exist or could be evaded. Usually, the relative decline of Dutch commerce in the Atlantic has been explained by the fact that rival nations excluded Dutch traders from their colonies by applying protective legislation. This contribution explores the possibility that the declining competitiveness of Dutch trade and shipping constituted an additional cause for the slow erosion of the Dutch share in the early modern Atlantic economy. Over time, it became the most important barrier to the Dutch maritime activities. During the first half of the nineteenth century, only the relative inefficiency of the Dutch merchant marine can explain why it was in need of protective legislation governing the maritime trade routes to and from the Dutch colonies in East and West in order to survive in the face of British and American competition.

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\* A section of this contribution has been published as P.C. Emmer, “The Dutch and the Atlantic Challenge, 1600–1800,” in *A ‘Deus ex Machina’ Revisited. Atlantic Colonial Trade and European Development*, ed. P.C. Emmer, O. Pétré-Grenouilleau and Jessica Vance Roitman (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 151–77.



### The Dutch in the Early Atlantic

The beginnings of the Dutch expansion in the Atlantic were impressive. During the initial phase between 1580 and 1650, Dutch merchants started to send their ships to all corners of the world. The Dutch were able to make important inroads into the Iberian trading networks in Asia and the Atlantic, and they conquered one of the most promising parts of the New World, Pernambuco, with its rapidly expanding sugar production. In addition, they took possession of a sizeable part of North America as well as of several small enclaves on the Coast of West Africa and a number of small islands in the Caribbean, some of which were developed into important commercial hubs. In spite of this flurry of activity, after 1650 the two largest Dutch colonies were lost in rapid succession, in addition to which Dutch ships encountered an increasing number of trade barriers due to the protectionist legislation of its commercial rivals. These developments reduced the Dutch share in Atlantic trade and shipping to less than 10 percent, much lower than their share in the intra-European trade and in the trade between Europe and Asia.<sup>1</sup>

There are two possible explanations for this decline. Most frequently, historians of the early Dutch overseas expansion point to the fact that the Netherlands was only a small country, that military and naval superiority might not have been of decisive importance when trading in Europe and Asia, but that it did make a difference in the Atlantic, where the Dutch were unable to match the resources of the larger powers. Also, in contrast to Asia, colonists were an important component of the expansion of Europe in the Atlantic, and the larger countries were in a much better position than the relatively small population of the Dutch republic to send migrants overseas.

During the past decades, however, some of the traditional explanations of the modest Dutch performance in the Atlantic have been challenged. Rather than blaming the rival powers for cutting the Dutch down to size, it might well have been possible that the Dutch share in the Atlantic commerce did not increase at the same pace as that of the other Atlantic powers because of internal factors such as the decline in the competitiveness of Dutch shipping, the low return on Dutch investments in the Atlantic or the lackluster attempts at sending European – not necessarily Dutch – colonists to the settlement colonies, thus foregoing the opportunity to create a transatlantic market for Dutch goods and services.

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1 Wim Klooster, "An Overview of Dutch Trade with the Americas" in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce. Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585–1817*, ed. Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), 365–384, 382.

In spite of these new arguments stressing the internal causes of the relatively modest Dutch participation in Atlantic trade and migration, there are still many reasons to support the contention that external forces such as the military, naval and demographic superiority of the larger nations in the Atlantic forced the Dutch to play a marginal role. The Spanish exclusion policies, the English Navigation Acts and the protectionist legislation in France, all backed up by an impressive naval presence, seem to confirm that the declining role of the Dutch in the Atlantic was indeed the result of external forces. This is not to say, of course, that the Dutch did not play a role in these empires, as the works of Silvia Marzagalli and Ana Crespo Solano for the French and Spanish, respectively, show in this volume. Had the Spanish, Portuguese, English, and French colonists been allowed to choose, they would have preferred to trade with the Dutch rather than with their own merchants. This is a point made in Christian Koot's contribution to this book for the English in the Chesapeake during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. During the first phase of Dutch expansion into the Atlantic, Dutch traders were known all over to offer lower freight rates and a better array of trade goods at lower prices than any of their competitors. That seems to suggest that external forces limited the Dutch expansion in the Atlantic.<sup>2</sup>

A case in point in the traditional historiography is the conquest and loss of Dutch Brazil. The Dutch could not defend this colony as they were attacked from within as well as from outside for the simple reason that there were too few Dutch colonists, with the result that the Portuguese remained a disloyal majority and a permanent safety hazard for the Dutch colonial administrators.<sup>3</sup> Only in West Africa were the Dutch able to hold their ground for the simple reason that military or naval superiority had little effect on the presence of the various European nations there due to the extremely high mortality rate among European crews and troops. The relatively important Dutch presence on the African Coast, where no outside power could dominate the others, seems to confirm the view that the Dutch could have achieved much more in the Atlantic had it been a more level playing field.

Over the past decades, however, new research seems to suggest that the various foreign protectionist policies were not the sole cause of the modest performance of the Dutch in the Atlantic, but that the decreasing competitiveness of Dutch shipping also played a part. Even in those areas and during those periods, where and when free competition in the Atlantic was possible, the

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2 Jonathan I. Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585–1740* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 208–209.

3 C.R. Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil, 1624–1654* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1973), 159–203.

Dutch commercial performance seemed far less competitive than has been assumed previously.

A case in point is the volte-face in the explanation of the rapid rise in the number of enslaved Africans on the island of Barbados during the period between 1640 and 1660, when the planters there changed from cultivating tobacco to sugar cane. Until recently, the only explanation for the rapid rise in the number of slaves on Barbados took the dominant position of the Dutch slave traders on the island for granted. After the loss of their slave market in Brazil, the Dutch had a fully developed slave trading system in place, but no customers. Keen to create “a second Brazil,” the Dutch slavers lowered their prices, making slavery more affordable for the Barbadian planters relative to the costs of importing indentured laborers from England and Ireland. Similarly, the ubiquitous Dutch traders were credited with being almost the sole suppliers of slaves to the French islands, where the transition from tobacco to sugar cane took place a few decades later than in the English Caribbean. It was assumed that until the third quarter of the seventeenth century the English and French slave traders could not compete with their Dutch rivals.

Recently, however, the explanation for the rapid rise in the number of slaves on Barbados in the decade between 1650 and 1660 has been turned upside down. It now seems that there were a sufficient number of English slave traders to provision Barbados with enslaved Africans right from the beginning of sugar cultivation on the island. True, in 1651 Cromwell proclaimed the first set of Navigation Acts that prohibited the colonists on Barbados from buying slaves from foreign ships. Yet, these laws would not have been enacted had the English slave trade been ineffective and almost non-existent as has been previously assumed.<sup>4</sup> This seems to suggest that the Dutch competitiveness in the early slave trade to the Caribbean had been far less impressive than had been previously assumed and that the English slave traders had been able to compete with the Dutch even before English colonial trade became protected.

For a later period in the seventeenth century Atlantic, similar doubts can be raised about the competitiveness of the Dutch merchant marine. After the reconquest of Dutch Brazil by the Portuguese in 1654, the shipping capacity of the Portuguese and Brazilian merchant fleets remained inadequate and it seemed that not Dutch, but English ships filled that gap.<sup>5</sup> The same applied to Spanish America, where the Dutch had to surrender part of their – illegal – trade to British interlopers. During the second half of the eighteenth century,

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4 Russell R Menard, *Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados* (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 59.

5 Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil*, 251.

Dutch competitiveness in trade and shipping in the Atlantic seemed to have declined even more as the British, French, American and even Danish slave traders became heavily involved in the slave trade to Cuba, but not the Dutch.

As far as migration goes, the same situation applies. The Dutch could have put more effort into recruiting colonists for their settlement colonies in North and South America. No rival power could have prevented this as demonstrated by the very successful recruitment policies of the Dutch East India Company, each year luring thousands of young men from all over Europe to risk their lives in the tropical parts of Asia with less than an even chance of returning home. Rather than using their recruitment system to send migrants to the Dutch settlement colonies, the Dutch merchants only became involved in the transport of mainly German migrants to the British settlement colonies. The Dutch merchant community was not interested in investing in “planting ventures.”<sup>6</sup> It could be argued that Dutch merchants and capital owners rather invested in ventures that yielded higher profits than sending migrants to the colonies and that English merchants were more inclined to invest in migration as they might have had fewer alternatives for investment. In reality, however, the investment opportunities of the two nations hardly differed and that seems to suggest that the English mercantile community had a better eye for long-term economic growth in the Atlantic than their Dutch counterparts.

### The British and Dutch Compared<sup>7</sup>

The unwillingness of the Dutch merchant community to invest more in naval power and migration made the Dutch into the Atlantic losers of the eighteenth

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6 Nicholas Canny, “English Migration into and across the Atlantic during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” in *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration, 1500–1800*, ed. Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 39–75; T.C. Smout, N.C. Landsman, and T.M. Devine, “Scottish Emigration in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” *Europeans on the Move*, 76–112; L.M. Cullen, “The Irish Diaspora of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries” *Europeans on the Move*, 113–152; and Nicholas Canny, “In Search of a Better Home? European Overseas Migration, 1500–1800,” *Europeans on the Move*, 263–283.

7 Why compare the British and the Dutch and not, for instance, the Dutch and the Portuguese? The Portuguese case would seem to have offered a more obvious counterpoint to the Dutch example, considering that both powers had a small geographical territory on the European continent and a relatively small population inhabiting this territory. Unfortunately, however, the state of the historiography regarding Portuguese economic history makes it impossible to identify the exact differences with Dutch trade history. Moreover, the Portuguese did not have a large mercantile shipping network in Europe like the British, the French and the

century. In fact, “a big divide” showed up when comparing the Atlantic achievements of Britain and the Netherlands. Britain became the only European country to which the Atlantic made a difference during both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. After 1750, Britain’s quantum leap forward in the volume of exports to the Caribbean and North America was unique.

In the eighteenth century, Britain’s Atlantic trade surpassed its European commercial activities. In 1700, 67 percent of British imports came from Europe and 23 percent from North America, the Caribbean, Africa and the East Indies. By 1750, these percentages were 55 percent and 45 percent respectively, and in the years just before 1800, 42 percent and 58 percent. In absolute numbers, the value of all overseas trade had quadrupled: from nearly 6 million pounds in 1700, surpassing nearly 8 million pounds in 1750, to nearly 24 million pounds during the last years of the eighteenth century. The story of British exports looked very similar: in 1700, 85 percent of these exports went to Europe, in 1750, 77 percent and in 1800, 30 percent. The value of British exports increased from 4.5 million pounds in 1700 to 18 million pounds around 1800. These figures indicate that the shift towards the Atlantic took place between 1750 and 1800, and that Britain’s most dynamic Atlantic trading partners were the West Indies and North America, whose share in the export of British domestically-made products, rose from 11 percent in 1700 to an impressive 56 percent just before 1800.<sup>8</sup>

The Dutch, on the other hand, remained more oriented toward trade within Europe, in spite of a modest shift towards the Atlantic during the second half of the eighteenth century. Of the 100 ships leaving Dutch ports between 1600 and 1800 on average about 80 had destinations in Europe and the Mediterranean, five sailed to Asia, and 15 ships had Atlantic destinations, a conclusion mirrored in Silvia Marzagalli’s sample for 1780 which is presented in this volume. In the second half of the eighteenth century the Atlantic offered more opportunities for economic growth than Europe and Asia as reflected in the sharp increase in British and French trade in the Atlantic.<sup>9</sup> The modest

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Dutch. Because of this, the Portuguese had to trade in the wider Atlantic, as they had no other alternative. These reasons make a comparison with the Dutch not a very attractive or fruitful endeavor at present.

8 Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy, 1600–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 19 (table).

9 G. Daudin, “Do Frontiers Give or do Frontiers Take? The Case of Intercontinental Trade in France at the End of the Eighteenth Century,” in *A ‘Deus ex Machina’ Revisited. Atlantic Colonial Trade and European Development*, ed. P.C. Emmer, O. Pétré-Grenouilleau and Jessica Vance Roitman, 199–224.

increase of the Dutch commercial activities in the Atlantic during that period is testimony to the growing relative inefficiency of Dutch shipping and trade.

The divergence of the Dutch and British experience in the Atlantic began at home. Economic growth in the Netherlands peaked between 1580 and 1620. After 1670, a period of stagnation set in, lasting for about two centuries. When economic growth in the Atlantic increased during the eighteenth century, the Netherlands had a stagnating economy at home. No wonder Adam Smith, writing in 1776, was of the opinion that the Netherlands had “acquired the full complement of riches which the nature of its soils and climate and its situation with respect to other countries, allowed it to acquire.” The Netherlands had accumulated so much capital that profits were driven close to zero, and the Dutch economy could advance no further.<sup>10</sup> This led to the phenomenon mentioned in Kenneth Morgan’s contribution to the volume. The Dutch began to invest heavily in British state bonds, in part because there were limited investment opportunities to be had at home.

Let there be no misunderstanding: the results of the early and short-lived period of growth in the Netherlands between 1575 and 1675 were impressive, even by modern standards. The Netherlands was the first country to break the trend of declining real wages caused by rising populations and rising prices. After 1580, a widening difference between the real wages in the Netherlands and England developed that lasted into the middle of the eighteenth century. During the first half century after 1575, when the growth spurt set in, the nominal wage for unskilled labor increased from 0.28 guilders to 0.73 guilders. As prices rose much more slowly, the increase in buying power was at least 50 percent. That explains why the Netherlands was flooded with migrant laborers from abroad. There was little danger that these migrant laborers would bring down wages since they were easily absorbed into the labor force as the demand for labor was rising rapidly, in spite of the opinion of Karl Marx that the Dutch Republic was the “model capitalist nation of the seventeenth century” and, thus, that “by 1648 the people of Holland [were] more overworked, poorer, and more brutally oppressed than those of all the rest of Europe put together.”<sup>11</sup>

The economic miracle at home took place well before economic opportunities in the wider Atlantic became attractive to the Dutch. The Dutch share in

10 Jan de Vries, “Dutch Economic Growth in Comparative-Historical Perspective, 1500–2000,” *De Economist* 148, no. 4 (2000): 443–467, citation Smith, 451.

11 Jan Lucassen, “Mobilization of Labour in Early Modern Europe,” in *Early Modern Capitalism. Economic and Social Change in Europe, 1400–1800*, ed. Maarten Prak (London: Routledge, 2001), 161–174, 162.

the Atlantic plantation production was modest at best and never sufficient to provide more than half the sugar processed in the Netherlands. After the failed attempt at conquering part of Portuguese Brazil, the Dutch acquired a major plantation colony in the New World by taking Suriname from the English in 1667. In addition, the Dutch took possession of some smaller neighboring plantation colonies in the same region on the coast of South America between the Amazon and Orinoco rivers. During the first 150 years the Dutch plantation colonies did increase their output, but none saw the dramatic upswing in the production of sugar and cotton that occurred in some of the other Caribbean colonies.

After the beginning of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780–1784), the differences between the Dutch and the British economies in the Atlantic became even more pronounced. During the last two decades of the eighteenth century, Britain saw its trade in the Atlantic, both in slaves and goods, grow more rapidly than its trade to other destinations, while the Dutch experienced a decline in their Atlantic trade, with the Dutch slave trade coming to a virtual standstill. The GDP per capita in the Netherlands peaked around 1650 and declined somewhat during the following 200 years, while between 1500 and 1700 the GDP per capita in England was much lower than that of the Netherlands, but almost doubled during the period 1700–1820. The same development occurred in European shipping. The Dutch share is estimated to have been 40 percent in 1650 and 12 percent in 1780; the British share grew from 12 percent to 26 percent.<sup>12</sup> Both countries saw the percentage of trade outside of Europe increase, but the reasons for this shift were very different.

In the case of the UK, the reorientation was caused by the Industrial Revolution that encouraged the exportation of manufactured goods in exchange for the importation of foodstuffs and raw materials. The “Agricultural Revolution” in the UK allowed the country to double its population during the eighteenth century. The Netherlands, on the other hand, experienced a very slow increase in its population and did not industrialize until late in the nineteenth century. The increasing share of colonial products in Dutch trade was not a reflection of a new and innovative home economy but, rather, of the opposite. It indicated that the Dutch had become less competitive in Europe and that they had to retreat to an area where part of their trade was protected by mercantilist legislation. Even so, the Dutch share in the total volume of the trade in plantation crops declined. The value added in this trade was limited,

12 Jan Luiten van Zanden, “Early Modern Economic Growth. A Survey of the European Economy, 1500–1800,” in *Early Modern Capitalism*, ed. Maarten Prak, 69–88, 76 (Table 4.3), 82 (Table 4.4).

and the colonial products were not paid for by new Dutch manufactures, but by traditional goods partly imported from Asia.

Britain, on the other hand, saw its export to North America triple between 1750 and 1800, and the export of British domestic products to the West Indies increased five times during these 50 years. This seems to suggest that the early mechanization of British industry did help to increase Britain's Atlantic trade as only merchants from that country could offer an array of goods that catered to the increasing purchasing power of the consumers in the wider Atlantic. Textiles are a case in point because only Britain could provide a mix of textiles that were imported both from India as well as from the European continent, in addition to those made at home both in the traditional way and by mechanized mills.

Again, the Dutch could point to unfair competition as the trade with British North America was restricted by the British Navigation Acts. However, that seems a feeble excuse as British trade with North America survived the end of mercantilism in North America. "Given the superiority and cheapness of British articles over those manufactured by the Dutch and the French, it is not surprising that some American merchants maintained contacts with British firms during the War of Independence and that British manufactured products were so much in demand in the USA."<sup>13</sup>

The two Atlantic products par excellence suffice to demonstrate this point: sugar and cotton. During the course of the eighteenth century, the consumption of sugar in Britain per head of the population increased far more rapidly than anywhere else in Europe, indicating a link with the process of industrialization.<sup>14</sup> Compared to Britain, the consumption of sugar per head of the population in the Netherlands remained relatively low. Most sugar refined in the Netherlands was exported abroad. The production of, and the trade in, cotton is another indicator of economic modernization. To a disproportionate extent, the cultivation of cotton in the Dutch West Indies was in the hands of British planters. Cotton boomed during the British occupation of the colony (1798–1816), suggesting that this increase was a response to innovation in the British rather than in the Dutch economy because the traditional cotton mills in the Netherlands had moved away from the cities and were not expanding.<sup>15</sup>

13 Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy*, 66.

14 D. Richardson, "The Slave Trade, Sugar, and British Economic Growth, 1748–1776," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17 (1987): 739–769.

15 Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy. Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 490–504, 385–389 (sugar); Stanley L. Engerman, "Mercantilism and Overseas Trade,



## The Atlantic Influence on the Dutch Economy

There have been a few attempts at calculating the volume of the Dutch share in the trade between Europe and the non-European world. Niels Steensgaard has suggested that the total value of all foreign imports into the Netherlands around the middle of the eighteenth century amounted to 150 million guilders, of which 20 to 25 percent came from non-European trade. No allowance had been made for the sale, re-export and distribution from, to and via the Netherlands of colonial imports and exports from and to the neighboring countries. Steensgaard calculated that around 1750 the share of the non-European trade as a percentage of all trade in Britain was about 50 percent – twice as much as for the Netherlands.<sup>16</sup>

A second difference between the Dutch and British trade patterns that the statistics of Steensgaard bring to light is the fact that within British colonial trade the importance of America versus Asia can be set at 3:1, while that ratio is roughly equal in the Dutch case.<sup>17</sup> Only during the decade 1770–1779 did the value of Dutch commodity imports from the West Indies exceed those from Asia.<sup>18</sup>

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1700–1800,” in *The Economic History of Britain since 1700*, ed. Roderick Floud and Donald McCloskey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 2nd ed.), 187–194. The declining Dutch share in the trade in sugar during the eighteenth century is mentioned in Gérard Le Bouëdec, *Activités maritimes et sociétés littorales de l'Europe atlantique, 1690–1790* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1997), 131–141. A discussion linking the rise of sugar consumption and industrialization is found in Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence. Europe, China, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 218, 274–275. The production and exportation of Surinamese cotton is discussed in Alex van Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast: Roofbouw en overleven in een Caraïbische plantagekolonie, 1750–1863* (Leiden: KITLV, 1993), 141, 201. These Dutch cotton exports show up as imports into Britain in Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977), 57 (Table 12).

16 Niels Steensgaard, “The Growth and Composition of the Long-Distance Trade of England and the Dutch Republic before 1750,” in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350–1750*, ed. James D. Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 102–152.

17 Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches: The Dutch Trade in the Caribbean, 1648–1795* (PhD diss., Department of History, University of Leiden, 1995), 169–199; Victor Enthoven, “An Assessment of Dutch Transatlantic Commerce, 1585–1817,” in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce. Dutch Transatlantic Shipping and Trade, 1585–1817*, ed. Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (Leiden/Boston, 2003), 385–445.

18 Jan de Vries, “The Dutch Atlantic Economies,” in *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Peter A. Coclanis (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press), 1–29.

How important were those Asian and West Indian imports to the Dutch economy as a whole? The most recent calculations put the national income of the Netherlands around 1800 at about 300 million guilders, while the trade outside Europe earned the Dutch about 20 to 30 million guilders or about 10 percent of the total.<sup>19</sup>

These figures indicate that the Dutch economy of the *ancien régime* was more dependent on income from trade with other continents than virtually any other economy in Europe, perhaps with the exception of Portugal. Trade was certainly less important to the British economy as a whole than to the Netherlands. Yet, within the mercantile sector of the two countries, non-European trade, and especially trade in the Atlantic, was twice as important for Britain as for the Netherlands. That seems to confirm the assumption that shipping and trade in the Atlantic were less profitable for the Netherlands than for Britain.<sup>20</sup>

The economic histories of the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and France are killing fields for anyone trying to link industrialization to foreign trade, let alone to Atlantic trade. England is the exception, but even for the economy of that country the contribution of income earned on trade outside Europe was modest at best, something in the order of the income derived from the economy of an average duchy in England. That seems to suggest that even for Britain, the most likely candidate country to have profited from the slave trade and slavery, the Industrial Revolution could not be directly linked to the increasing economic benefits derived from New World slavery.<sup>21</sup> In all other countries with a stake in the Atlantic, industrialization took place when the Atlantic slave trade and slavery had been abolished.

Anyone looking for a link between the contribution of the colonies to the Dutch economy and industrialization will not point at the Atlantic, but at Java. Between 1840 and 1870, the transfer payments generated by the forced cropping system ("cultivation system") on Java flowed into the public purse, and were used to increase government expenditure on the construction of waterways and of a new railroad system in the Netherlands. These transfer payments

19 Vries and Van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy*, 704–705.

20 Patrick K. O'Brien and Stanley L. Engerman, "Exports and Growth of the British Economy from the Glorious Revolution to the Peace of Amiens," in *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System*, ed. Barbara L. Solow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 177–209, 186; S. Engerman, "Mercantilism and Overseas Trade," 191–192 and Le Bouëdec, *Activités maritimes*, 151.

21 David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, "The Importance of Slavery and the Slave Trade to Industrializing Britain," *Journal of Economic History* 60, no. 1 (March 2000): 123–144.

reached their peak in the late 1850s when they made up as much as 23 percent of the yearly income of the Dutch state.<sup>22</sup>

### **Why the British in the Atlantic Moved Ahead and the Dutch Remained Behind**

In addition to the comparative decline in the productivity of Dutch shipping in the Atlantic and the Dutch preference to recruit migrants for Asia rather than for the Atlantic, there are three other features that made the Dutch Atlantic different from its British counterpart, and that impacted negatively on the profitability of the Dutch Atlantic.

The first deviation from the pattern of British activities in the Atlantic was the relatively large volume of the Dutch transit trade. Recent research has shown that the illegal trade to and from Spanish America, in addition to the transit trade to and from the French Caribbean, was worth more than the value produced in the Dutch plantation colonies. The Dutch preference for the trade rather than for production can be explained by the fact that it required much less investment. The drawback was, however, that the Dutch had no control over the volume, which differed widely from year to year, while the British colonies produced a steadily increasing volume of sugar, coffee and cotton.<sup>23</sup>

A second difference between the British and the Dutch experience pertains to the way in which both countries financed their West Indian activities. In the British case, there was a constant flow of investment money going to the plantations. Part of that money was the capital that a new planter took with him to the West Indies and another part was provided by merchant houses that specialized in the importation and sale of plantation produce, as they were used to advance loans and mortgages to their customers. Until 1750, the same pattern existed in the Dutch Caribbean, but, after that year, groups of Amsterdam investors suddenly started to offer large mortgages to West Indian planters in Suriname as well as in the British "Ceded Islands." As was the case elsewhere in Europe, Dutch investors moved away from buying government

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22 For a broader discussion of the contribution of the non-European world to the growth of the economy of the colonial powers see Stanley L. Engerman, "The Atlantic Economy of the Eighteenth Century: Some Speculations on Economic Development in Britain, America, Africa and Elsewhere," *Journal of European Economic History* 24, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 145–175, especially 157–168.

23 P.C. Emmer, O. Pétré-Grenouilleau and Jessica Vance Roitman, eds., *A 'Deus ex Machina' Revisited*, 151–177 and Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches*.

bonds and other low-risk instruments of investment and started to put some of their money into high-risk “bubbles.” In this case, the result was disastrous. The amount of mortgages provided to the Suriname planters far exceeded their ability to pay the interest on these mortgages, let alone to pay back the principal. After 1773, this situation resulted in a wave of bankruptcies, and soon the majority of the plantations were owned by the investment funds that had provided the loans and mortgages in the past. No wonder, then, that after the crash of the Amsterdam stock exchange the flow of new investment capital for the plantation colonies dropped dramatically, and this process of over- and under-investment severely hampered the expansion and modernization of the plantations. As a result, some areas of Dutch Guiana could only continue to grow due to the immigration of British planters with their slaves and capital. In addition to slowing down the development of new plantation areas in Suriname, the lack of credit also affected the established plantations.<sup>24</sup>

A third difference constituted the rapid decline of the Dutch slave trade and the dramatic growth of the British slave trade. In part, that difference can be explained by the way in which the slave traders were paid. In the British case, the bills came from the agents of the metropolitan merchant houses residing in the West Indies. This provided the British slave traders with much more security than their Dutch colleagues. “By comparison with their French and Dutch counterparts, the Liverpool slave traders appear to have been much more independent of colonial credit and relatively unencumbered with the heavy indebtedness of the plantation economy.”<sup>25</sup> In contrast, the Dutch slave trade suffered badly from the lack of new money for the Dutch plantations. Before the crash of the Amsterdam stock exchange, planters used bills of exchange drawn on the merchant houses cum mortgage providers in the Netherlands in order to pay for the slaves. That meant that slaving firms could obtain full payment for their slaves upon the return of the slave ship to its homeport. After the crash this method of payment came to a grinding halt, as most bills of exchange were no longer honored and, as a consequence, the shipping firms themselves were forced to collect the price of their slaves in cash or in kind from the planters. It sometimes took years and years before a slave cargo had been paid in full. That explains why, after the crash, and again

24 Gert Oostindie, “British Capital, Industry and Perseverance’ versus Dutch ‘Old School’?: The Dutch Atlantic and the Takeover of Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo, 1750–1815,” *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 127, no. 4 (2012): 28–55.

25 B.L. Anderson, “The Lancashire Bill System and its Liverpool Practitioners,” in *Trade and Transport; Essays in Economic History in Honour of T.S. Willan*, ed. W.H. Chaloner and Barrie M. Ratcliffe (Manchester: Rowman and Littlefield 1977), 59–97, esp. 80.

after the end of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War in 1784, the Dutch slave trade declined rapidly, while the British slave trade (and that of most slave trading nations in the Atlantic) experienced a dramatic increase in volume. In order to survive at all, the Dutch slave trade had to be freed from all taxes and levies.<sup>26</sup>

In all fairness, however, the superior buying power of the planters in the British Caribbean must have also contributed to the remarkably high profits in the British slave trade. British planters had more buying power because they enjoyed incomes that were, in part, based on the protective tariffs for their sugar in the British home market.<sup>27</sup> The British consumer not only bought much more sugar than any consumer on the Continent, but he or she also had to pay more for it than elsewhere. The figures are telling. In the 1720s, Britain re-exported about 20 percent of its sugar to foreign markets and, during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, this percentage had fallen to less than 5 percent. The planters in the Dutch West Indies, on the other hand, did not receive protection and had to compete with the most cost-effective producers anywhere, resulting in relatively low profits in the Dutch slave trade as well as in Dutch West Indian plantation agriculture.<sup>28</sup>

### Conclusion

By comparing the Dutch expansion in Asia and the Atlantic, it seems self-evident that the constituent components of the successful Dutch policy in Asia produced a different, if not an opposite, effect in the Atlantic. A large monopoly company for all Dutch trade to and within Asia worked wonders,

26 The plantations loans have been studied by J.P. van de Voort, *De Westindische plantages van 1720 tot 1795: financiën en handel* (Eindhoven: Witte, 1973). For the British slave trade see Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy, 1660–1800*, 75.

27 Stanley L. Engerman, "British Imperialism in a Mercantilist Age, 1492–1849: Conceptual Issues and Empirical Problems," *Revista de Historia Económica* 16, no. 1 (1998): 195–231, especially 206–207, "Thus the protective provision of the Acts [of Navigation] led to some redistribution from British consumers to planters in the British West Indies."

28 Seymour Drescher, *Econocide*, 52–53; David Richardson, "Profits in the Liverpool Slave Trade: the accounts of William Davenport, 1757–1784," in *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade, and Abolition. Essays to Illustrate Current Knowledge and Research*, ed. Roger Anstey and P.E.H. Hair (Liverpool: Historic Society of Lincolnshire and Cheshire 1976), 60–90, 80 mentions a profit rate of 8 percent. That is more than double the rate of the *Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie* operating between 1732 and 1803 according to Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760–1810* (London: Macmillan 1974), 38–57, esp. 57.

but its sister company in the Atlantic was a failure. Similarly, the Dutch recruiting system for staffing its trading posts and ships in Asia was extremely successful, but not for peopling its Atlantic colonies. As far as trade between Europe and Asia is concerned, the Dutch might well have carried about half the total volume, in addition to which they had a sizeable trading network within Asia. In the Atlantic, on the other hand, the Dutch share in the transatlantic slave trade was about 5 percent and their share in other branches of trade in the Atlantic was perhaps somewhat higher.

In contrast to Asia, it was impossible to monopolize trade routes or the production of goods in the Atlantic. That is why legislation was needed to create protection. The trade between the European countries and their New World colonies was subject to protective legislation and even the champions of free trade, the Dutch, legislated that all goods and slaves imported or exported to and from the Dutch plantation colonies should be shipped on Dutch ships only. In actual practice, however, a part of the Atlantic trade was open to competition as the Portuguese, Spanish, and French merchants and shipping companies were not always able to provide shipping capacity, slaves, and trade goods in sufficient numbers and quantities at competitive prices. During the seventeenth century, the Dutch played an important part in providing the illegal tonnage, goods and slaves to third parties, but over time their competitive edge diminished dramatically as is shown by the declining volume of the Dutch slave trade to non-Dutch colonies. In the second half of the eighteenth century, when British, American and even Danish slave traders were successful in supplying Cuban planters with slaves when the island started to produce sugar in a large way, the Dutch were absent.

The same applies to migration. In Asia, the Dutch were extremely successful in attracting young men from all over Europe to serve in the Dutch East India Company. In the Atlantic, however, the Dutch hardly made an effort to find settlers for their colonies in the New World. Unlike the English, the number of indentured laborers migrating to the New World was very small; while the Dutch mercantile community did not seem interested in financing “planting” ventures as was the case in England. After the loss of Dutch Brazil and Dutch North America, the Dutch no longer possessed suitable settlement colonies and the number of Dutch migrants settling in foreign colonies was negligible in the Atlantic.

The opposite seems to apply to Dutch investments in the Atlantic. The money available in the Netherlands for Atlantic ventures was larger than the demand in the Dutch Atlantic. That is why investment funds were organized that provided anonymous mortgages to planters both in the Dutch and non-Dutch Caribbean. In the case of the British, the investment in foreign

colonies was not anonymous, but linked to British planters and merchants moving into French, Spanish or Dutch colonies.

And last but not least, the home economy should be considered. The size of the consumer market at home did not govern the volume of Asian imports as luxury goods could command a European-wide market. On average imports from Asia had a high value and a small volume, almost no value was added in Europe and the clientele was international. Most Asian goods might be auctioned in London or Amsterdam, but they traveled on to other parts of Europe and indeed to Africa and the New World.

The production, sale, and consumption of Atlantic goods, on the other hand, was, to a large extent, dominated by the boundaries of the various national compartments in the Atlantic in spite of smuggling and illegal trade documented in a growing number of studies.<sup>29</sup> The fact that empire mattered, despite the permeability of imperial systems evidenced in the incorporation of “outsiders” like the Dutch within the French or Spanish systems as detailed in this volume by Silvia Marzagalli and Ana Crespo Solano, respectively, is a point brought home in the chapter by Christian Koot in this volume. Some parts of Spanish America seemed to have conducted more illegal than legal trade and all of the plantation colonies in the Caribbean were dependent upon the “Yankee traders” for the importation of certain victuals and the exportation of dram and molasses regardless of the confining laws of mercantilism. This dependency on North American traders is vividly highlighted in Karwan Fatah-Black’s contribution to this book. He shows how necessary to Suriname the provisions provided by the North Americans were. Yet the majority of the imports and exports remained within the various national sections of the Atlantic, and the British section was the most successful one.

The British had the only Atlantic empire with a truly integrated economy, especially when we include Ireland. During the course of the seventeenth century England had developed its own manufacturing industry protected against foreign competition by the Navigation Acts and the same protection was granted to the sugar produced in the English Caribbean. Yet, towards the end of the eighteenth century, no country in the world consumed so much sugar per head of the population as Britain. Protection makes for high prices, but in the British Atlantic this was not an obstacle to growth. The inhabitants of

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29 David R. Ringrose, *Spain, Europe and the ‘Spanish Miracle’, 1700–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) and Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, “Colonial Trade, And Economic Development in France, Seventeenth to the Twentieth Centuries” in *A ‘Deus ex Machina’ Revisited. Atlantic Colonial Trade and European Development*, ed. P.C. Emmer, O. Pétré-Grenouilleau and Jessica Vance Roitman, 225–261.

Great Britain could afford high sugar prices as their country was the first to industrialize, providing higher per capita incomes. Industrialization also explains why higher wages do not necessarily result in higher prices for British exports as it increased the labor productivity dramatically. During the first decade of the nineteenth century, 54 percent of all manufactured goods in Britain were exported to the Americas, a figure that no other European country with an Atlantic empire could match even if we allow for the compensation effect as British exports to the Continent had declined because of the war with France.<sup>30</sup>

The Dutch Atlantic could never rival the British achievement for the simple reason that the market for Dutch exports in Africa and the New World was extremely small. That is why the Atlantic only had a very modest impact on the Dutch economy, while the buying power of the British settlement colonies was substantial. The first-ever population count in Great Britain held in 1801 revealed that the country had about 10 million inhabitants, while Ireland and the New World colonies (including the recently independent US) counted more than 8 million inhabitants.<sup>31</sup> The population of the Dutch Atlantic counted 2 million inhabitants in Europe and not even 100,000 in their Atlantic colonies, most of whom were slaves.

These figures seem to suggest that the Dutch responded to the Atlantic challenge by creating a trading empire, while the British not only created a trading empire but also an important market for their home industry. In addition to the usual imports of sugar, coffee and cotton, their Atlantic empire became a substantial outlet for British goods and services and in the nineteenth century came to include the newly independent parts of South America.

These facts indicate that over time the Dutch experience in the Atlantic deviated drastically from that of Britain, and, in order to explain this difference, this chapter has discussed several external and internal factors influencing the Dutch performance, showing that both external and internal factors were at play. That the Dutch were unable to hold on to one or more large-scale settlement colonies was due to an external factor: the lack of naval power. Even France, a much larger, a more powerful and more populous country than the Netherlands, lost its settlement colony in North America, albeit a century later than the Dutch. However, the declining Dutch share in the Atlantic trade was

30 Craig Muldrew, "Atlantic World 1760–1820," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World, 1450–1850*, ed. Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 618–634, 627–631.

31 Carole Shammas, "Household Formation, Lineage, and Gender Relations in the Early Modern Atlantic World," in *Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World*, 362–381, 363 (Table 21.1).



caused by an internal factor: the relative decline in the productivity of Dutch trade and shipping. That is why the Dutch share in the trade in goods and slaves to non-Dutch colonies diminished relative to that of its competitors in areas where protective legislation hardly made the difference. It also explains as to why the Dutch were unable to profit commercially from the opening up of Latin America and relied heavily on protectionist legislation in order to prevent being outcompeted by British and US firms in the trade and shipping to their own colonies. Trade barriers, the much-hated stumbling block for Dutch expansion in the seventeenth century, had become a protective wall. Dutch commerce in the Atlantic had come full circle.

# Conclusion

## *A Dutch Moment in Atlantic Historiography*

*Alison Games*

One of the foremost contributions of this collection is to bring together recent scholarship on the Dutch in the Atlantic world in an English-language volume for an international audience. The collection showcases varied approaches to the Dutch Atlantic. The essays investigate an impressive breadth of topics, with an emphasis on trade and commerce but also attentive to such themes as religious practices, domestic relations, slavery, circuits of knowledge, culture, and politics. The authors explore a wide range of connections, including transatlantic religious ties, migration, administrative appointments and patronage networks, commercial links of all sorts, and ties between Dutch settlements and other European colonies and ports. Some of those connections linked trading posts and colonies to the Netherlands, while others fostered ties within regions, to neighbors, or to important trading partners in more remote locales. These essays identify important similarities to other European outposts, as in the case of the free ports of Statia, St. Barthélemy, and St. Vincent, and also intriguing differences: there was, for example, a Dutch West India interest, as there was an English one, although the Dutch coalition looked different in ways that suited “the particularistic nature of the Dutch Republic.”<sup>1</sup>

For those unable to read Dutch-language sources, this volume is a boon. It makes it possible for nonspecialists to deepen their understanding of different aspects of Atlantic history in general and the Dutch Atlantic in particular. Aside from assertions that the Dutch were important in the seventeenth century, many Atlantic historians really do not know with certainty how or why. Moreover, some of the assumptions historians have had about their role in sugar production or the slave trade, for example, turn out to be erroneous. Take the case of the Dutch role in the English sugar boom on Barbados. The old wisdom held that the Dutch instructed the English in sugar cultivation in Barbados and fostered its development with capital and slaves. The historian Russell R. Menard’s assiduous investigation into Barbados sources, however, has yielded no evidence that the Dutch provided instruction or significant capital for sugar production, although they do appear to have offered both a market for sugar in Amsterdam and vessels to carry the product. They may well have played some modest role in providing capital for the sugar boom. Menard suspects that the story of Dutch assistance was invented by English colonists

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1 Han Jordaen and Victor Wilson, in this volume; Henk den Heijer, in this volume.

who were eager to protest the stringent Navigation Acts of 1660, which limited them to shipping goods on English ships, and they sought to justify their objections by pointing to the centrality of the Dutch to sugar production. English sugar planters blamed this law for their financial difficulties during a period of depression, and the “myth of the Dutch” was born.<sup>2</sup> This example points to the many potential myths that have evolved around the history of the Dutch Atlantic, and of the Dutch in the Atlantic, and which have endured thanks to linguistic impediments and source limitations. Thanks to this edited volume, nonspecialists will gain a deeper understanding of how the Dutch shaped the Atlantic world, how the Atlantic world shaped the Dutch, and what a Dutch Atlantic world looked like.

Several aspects of this volume echo the goals and accomplishments of *The British Atlantic World*, a major coedited work that contributed to the maturation of the field of Atlantic history at the time of its publication in 2002.<sup>3</sup> At that stage in the development of the field, there was a lot of interest in looking at the imperial Atlantics, those European states that projected their power beyond Europe. This approach was fully displayed in a 1999 *Itinerario* forum, which contained essays on the Spanish, French, and British Atlantics, and an essay arguing that there was no Dutch Atlantic.<sup>4</sup> This way of conceptualizing the Atlantic in national and imperial terms has had important staying power; two important edited volumes on Atlantic history published in 2008 and 2011 contained several essays taking this approach.<sup>5</sup>

When *The British Atlantic World* appeared, many historians imagined that volumes devoted to other national Atlantics might follow.<sup>6</sup> Instead, in the years since that work’s publication, and with the development and maturation of the field of Atlantic history, two lines of criticism emerged that have pushed the field away from national approaches. One critique pertains to

2 Russell R. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 51.

3 David Armitage and Michael Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

4 See the four essays published in *Itinerario* (32) in 1999: Carla Rahn Phillips wrote on the Spanish, Silvia Marzagalli on the French, Willem W. Klooster and Pieter C. Emmer on the Dutch, and David Hancock on the English.

5 Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), chapters 2–6; Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World c. 1450–c. 1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), chapters 11–14.

6 On this expectation, see “Are We All Global Historians Now? An Interview with David Armitage,” *Itinerario* 36, no. 2 (August 2012): 7–28, 14.

geography: what processes were unique to the Atlantic, as opposed to shared features of a period of global interaction and expansion.<sup>7</sup> A second critique derives from concerns about examining a single ethnic or linguistic group in isolation. The most cogent critiques along these lines have called for an “entangled” history, one which scrutinizes interactions *across* imperial, national, linguistic, and ethnic lines.<sup>8</sup> Although the *Dutch Atlantic Connections* volume appears at a historiographic moment when historians are, for the most part, shifting away from imperial Atlantics, the capacious intellectual perspective undergirding the book enables the collection to speak directly to current concerns among Atlantic historians. As these essays demonstrate, any study of the Dutch is one of entanglement.

The book’s focus on interactions and connections is a marked departure from earlier approaches to the Dutch Atlantic, including important ones by contributors to this volume who in the past evinced some skepticism about the existence of a Dutch Atlantic.<sup>9</sup> As Oostindie and Roitman observe, previously the historiography of the Dutch in the Atlantic largely examined the Dutch in isolation.<sup>10</sup> Such an approach is hardly true only of the Dutch, of course, and it is perhaps even more true of other imperial historiographies with more linguistically constrained historians. In response to this older historiographic practice, then, the ambition of the *Dutch Atlantic Connections* volume has been to pioneer an approach to the Dutch Atlantic that privileges connections, insisting that any study of a small place be conceptualized solely in terms of its linkages with other locales. This kind of transnational or entangled history is easily called for, but very hard to do. For all its challenges, however, it is vitally important to try to do this kind of research – transnational, multilingual, looking at the Atlantic in terms of intersections, entanglements, and interactions. The contents of this volume therefore start to model how a history organized around examining connections might work, and it is this aspect that produces the second important contribution of this book. 2014 is, historiographically speaking, a Dutch moment in Atlantic history.

7 “Forum: Beyond the Atlantic,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (October 2006): 675–742.

8 “AHR Forum: Entangled Empires of the Atlantic World,” *American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (June 2007): 710–799.

9 For two skeptical views, see Pieter C. Emmer and Willem M. Klooster, “The Dutch Atlantic, 1600–1800: Expansion without Empire,” *Itinerario* 23, no. 2 (1999): 48–69; Benjamin Schmidt, “The Dutch Atlantic: From Provincialism to Globalism,” in *Atlantic History*, ed. Greene and Morgan, 163–190.

10 See Gert Oostindie and Jessica Vance Roitman, “Repositioning the Dutch in the Atlantic, 1680–1800,” *Itinerario* 36, no. 2 (August 2012): 129–160.

This close study of the Dutch Atlantic prods Atlantic historians to rethink some of the basic frameworks they have deployed in their approaches to Atlantic history. Because historians of the British and Iberian (mainly Spanish) worlds have been especially active in writing Atlantic history, and, indeed, played an important role as pioneers of the field, patterns for these European kingdoms as they projected themselves into the Atlantic have come to stand in for the Atlantic world as a whole. As a result, themes pertaining to territorial occupation and the growth of colonial societies have generated important typologies for the Atlantic writ large.<sup>11</sup>

The first Europeans to secure permanent footholds in the Western Atlantic were the Spanish, and, drawing on models of occupation tested in the Iberian peninsula during the “Reconquest,” they established a style of colonization based on the exploitation and conversion of indigenous people, the resettlement of Spanish migrants, and the transfer of fundamental Iberian institutions to the Americas. Even though the Portuguese had already established important trading posts on the West and Central African Coasts, and with these commercial enterprises indicated the multifaceted endeavors Europeans pursued in the Atlantic, it was the Spanish model of American colonization that shaped historiographies, making this style of occupation and exchange appear to be a dominant European strategy in the Atlantic. The British likewise ended up displacing many indigenous people (through war and disease) from their home territories, and claimed this territory for themselves, echoing Spanish strategies in important and occasionally deliberate ways.

These are obviously gross caricatures of widely varied and complex processes, but the historiographic dominance of these patterns of territorial dominion and control over people has made major trading enterprises (in Canada, Brazil, and West and Central Africa) look too much like anomalies within the larger Atlantic, even though that list of regions alone might indicate that trade was a pervasive pattern, not to mention the economic value of the commodities (dye goods, pelts, gold, ivory, salt, textiles, and slaves, to name some of the key items), or of other extractive industries, including the lucrative fisheries. Putting the Dutch in the equation should continue to put pressure on the historiographic emphasis in Atlantic history on European control (or aspirations for control) of land and indigenous subjects, as these tended not to be

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11 See, for example, the four-part periodization in *Oxford Handbook*, ed. Canny and Morgan, “Emergence,” “Consolidation,” “Integration,” and “Disintegration”; and the three-part typology in *Atlantic American societies: from Columbus through abolition, 1492–1888*, ed. Alan Karras and J.R. McNeill (London: Routledge, 1992): Implantations (1492–c. 1650), Maturity (c. 1650–1770), and Transitions (1770–1888).

major preoccupations of Dutch colonists, with some notable exceptions. These exceptions include the Dutch settlements on the so-called “Wild Coast” of South America (Suriname, Berbice, Demerara, Essequibo, and Guiana), which are included in this volume, and New Netherland and the colony at the Cape of Good Hope, which the editors decided to exclude.

Commonplace periodizations of the Atlantic also have a reduced salience when we look closely at the Dutch experience over the long eighteenth century. For the Atlantic as a whole, the eighteenth century was an era of tightening imperial ties, of the maturation of political, cultural, social, economic, and religious institutions. The late eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries witnessed independence movements in mainland colonies, accompanied by loyalism for most island colonies. This characterization of the Atlantic in this era as in the midst of an Age of Revolution endures, a depiction that applies to most, but not all, places in the Western Atlantic, and which increases the omission of Africa from the larger field of Atlantic history. For the Dutch, this period was certainly one of warfare and disruption throughout the Atlantic. But this era was not a time of revolution or independence in the Western Dutch Atlantic, despite considerable political upheaval in the Republic in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Integrating the Dutch experience in the Atlantic challenges these generalizations, already problematic because of their limitation to the American mainland, and thus better suited to a history of the Americas than to a history of the Atlantic.<sup>12</sup> Finding new periodizations and typologies that encompass multiple historical actors and approaches, however, remains challenging. Jan de Vries proposes a four-part periodization for the Dutch Atlantic, but this interpretation derives from his study of the Dutch Atlantic economy and reflects the economic patterns of the Dutch Atlantic world.<sup>13</sup> As Karel Davids’ essay reminds us, different subjects require their own periodizations. Even when the Dutch Atlantic waned in the eighteenth century, Davids argues, the intellectual engagement of Dutch scholars continued unabated.

Beyond important questions about typologies and periodizations, a focus on Dutch Atlantic connections brings important issues to the fore and helps us

12 A history of the Americas has its own value, but it should not be confused with a history of the Atlantic world. On such a history, see for example, Herbert Bolton, “The Epic of Greater America,” *AHR* 38 (1933): 448–474. See also Silvio Zavala, “A General View of the Colonial History of the New World,” *AHR* 66 (1961): 913–929; Jack P. Greene, “Hemispheric History and Atlantic History,” in *Atlantic History*, ed. Greene and Morgan, chapter 11.

13 Jan de Vries, “The Dutch Atlantic Economies,” in *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel*, ed. Peter A. Coclanis (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 1–29.

envision what Atlantic history might look like if historians take connections more seriously. First, a Dutch-informed Atlantic history privileges an international orientation. This perspective emerges in many different ways in these essays, starting with the composition of the population in Dutch-claimed territory. A highly diverse European population inhabited WIC settlements, which might be a distinctive characteristic of the Dutch Atlantic.<sup>14</sup> While many other colonial regions contained diverse European inhabitants, the territories under the Dutch West India Company (WIC) seem unique in the *percentage* of the European population that was not Dutch. (African-born and African-descended populations often outnumbered European populations in the Atlantic world.) In Demerara, for example, the white population was two-thirds British in 1800.<sup>15</sup> Many of these non-Dutch Europeans acquired considerable political and economic power, such as the Bermudian Richard Downing Jennings who lived on Statia. These essays demonstrate the ability, willingness, and, often, eagerness of the Dutch to assimilate other people, not necessarily into a single Dutch culture, whatever that might be, but into a Dutch political dominion and commercial operation.

As Jennings' Bermuda background intimates, this diverse population in Dutch colonies enhanced regional ties between Dutch settlements and other locales, within the Caribbean, on adjacent islands, or on the mainland, whether as close as Venezuela or as far as Boston. This heterogeneity turns out, we learn from Victor Wilson and Han Jordaan's essay, also to have been characteristic of the Danish and Swedish islands, which contained English, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, and French inhabitants, not to mention Danes and Swedes. Many of these colonists had immigrated from within the region, so this heterogeneity suggests both a European cosmopolitanism and a thickening regional network. Gert Oostindie's examination of Berbice, Demerara, and Essequibo indicates that these three colonies were precociously British, before any official takeover, because of the deliberate recruitment of British colonists from the West Indies to settle there. Thus when we focus on European populations, we can discern how connections enhanced *regional* ties, not necessarily *transatlantic* connections. It would be interesting to compare these patterns of regional and oceanic connectedness with those of African and African-descended populations in the Dutch Atlantic world.

Looking at the "Dutch" Atlantic world, then, has the intriguing benefit of bringing into focus a wide range of minority populations – some of whom,

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14 On this heterogeneity, see especially Oostindie and Roitman, "Repositioning the Dutch," 139–142, and their introduction to this book.

15 Oostindie essay, in this volume.

as was true for the British in Demerara, were in fact the majority. Religious minorities – most notably Jews – were also important in the Dutch Atlantic, as Roitman and Ben-Ur demonstrate in their contribution, and in the case of Suriname, they comprised a significant portion of the free population. Even the Dutch inhabitants of Dutch colonies did not necessarily feel bound to the Netherlands or to the interests of the WIC. Oostindie shows these conflicted loyalties in the case of the Dutch planters in Demerara, Essequibo, and Berbice, who seemed ready to accept British takeover if it liberated them from their debt obligations.

Another indicator of the international nature of Dutch Atlantic societies was language. The Dutch proved poor exporters of many elements of Dutch culture. Language provides the foremost example. Dutch seems to have rarely become the lingua franca of Dutch settlements. In Suriname and Curaçao, creole languages became the lingua franca – Sranan Tongo (an English-based Creole) in Suriname and Papiamentu (a Portuguese-based Creole) in Curaçao. These languages originated in enslaved populations. As Roitman and Ben-Ur demonstrate, however, Papiamentu was adopted by Jews and other people of European and mixed descent in Curaçao. Their analysis lets us see how language, as they put it, “had begun to cross socio-economic, racial, religious, and ethnic lines.” This linguistic heterogeneity was true of free ports and other islands as well: in St. Croix, inhabitants spoke English, while on St. Thomas and St. John, they spoke Dutch.

Language patterns had many implications in the Dutch Atlantic world, as Davids demonstrates. They shaped academic training in Europe and both circumscribed and expanded circuits of knowledge. The Dutch, for example, were connected to the English intellectual world because so many English-speaking students from England and Scotland studied in Leiden between 1680 and 1730. At the same time, more Dutch scholars were fluent in French than in English, thus opening another important intellectual sphere. The French, however, were unlikely to know Dutch and thus unlikely to enroll at Dutch universities. These linguistic patterns and the educational ambitions they fostered undergirded the circulation of knowledge in the Dutch Atlantic in the eighteenth century, shaping not only what information came to Dutch scholars and intellectuals but also what Dutch knowledge crossed linguistic lines. Davids’ essay points to an important difference between the Eastern and Western Dutch Atlantics, because inhabitants of different backgrounds in various West Indian locales may have found it *easier* to converse with each other than some of these scholars in Europe, where institutional traditions occasionally turned out to be impediments to crossing linguistic (and educational) barriers.



If the “Dutch” inhabitants of WIC colonies turn out not to have spoken the language of the WIC Directors in the United Provinces, cultural artifacts once regarded as important representations of Dutch culture overseas turn out to have an equally complex history, one that makes it difficult to discern when the Dutch themselves were expressing or conveying national or patriotic sentiments. Benjamin Schmidt’s analysis in this volume of paintings by Frans Post and their market makes this point effectively, illustrating as it does the diverse, non-Dutch market – and in the case of the Brazil paintings, the Catholic, Portuguese subjects they depicted. Schmidt challenges previous interpretations that regarded these works as expressions of a Dutch patriotic sentiment. Instead, he suggests that Post painted for a diverse and dispersed European market, one more interested in exoticism in general than in Dutch Brazil in particular.<sup>16</sup>

The Dutch Atlantic world was an international one – but so, too, were the territories claimed by the French, Portuguese, Spanish, and British, and inhabited by Europeans, Amerindians, and Africans, even if some of those cosmopolitan elements have been obscured by the ability of European rulers to impose more robust institutional and cultural structures on their subjects. Perhaps it would be a salutary exercise for historians to approach all the populations they study in the Atlantic as if they were “Dutch”: outward-oriented, connected to an assortment of national, religious, and ethnic actors in a variety of polities and locales, and quite probably not “Dutch” at all.

A second characteristic of the Dutch Atlantic is the important economic ties the Dutch forged (as middlemen, as traders, as brokers, as inhabitants of trade entrepôts) with other polities and people. The historical emphasis on the Dutch as traders, with a commensurate focus on connections, puts networks at the center of the Dutch Atlantic. The Dutch were entangled in multiple states and empires. One consequence of the economic ties Dutch people forged was new lines of political, cultural, and commercial exchange that linked Dutch settlements with non-Dutch locales. Karwan Fatah-Black shows us an important gap between the policy of the Suriname Company, which sought to sever local ties in favor of transatlantic ties, and the preferences of the colonists, whose commercial networks reached across imperial borders and embedded Suriname in the region. He argues forcefully that these connections were not incidental to the colony’s formation, but rather “*constitutive*” of the colony and of Dutch efforts in the region. He traces these linkages in a variety of ways – looking, for example, at efforts to recruit colonists from within the region, at the networks Jews established, and at the importance of Barbados to the

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16 See Schmidt’s essay in this volume.

colony.<sup>17</sup> Kenneth Morgan likewise shows that in 1720, most of the mill horses, fish, and other stores in Suriname came from New England.<sup>18</sup>

Other essays point to the importance of Dutch traders outside areas of Dutch control. Silvia Marzagalli argues that the French colonial system relied on non-French actors, and Ana Crespo Solano demonstrates the significance of Dutch and other foreign merchants in Spain's American trade. Morgan makes a similar point, observing that the British system's flexibility was essential in permitting English and Dutch commercial relations to thrive.<sup>19</sup> The Dutch could only be successful middlemen in economic systems that provided them with breathing space, as the French, Spanish, and British did, to the benefit, it seems, of all parties. Dutch-descended traders outside the WIC-controlled Dutch Atlantic were also important, as Morgan shows for North American trade, with the continued significance of Dutch merchants in New York until the era of the American Revolution.

Linkages were not limited to trade, although trade routes often circumscribed the flows of ideas or people. Wim Klooster sketches the many ways in which Curaçao was tied to different places in the Atlantic.<sup>20</sup> Runaway slaves provide an important and unusual vantage point on these connections. Klooster draws on their experiences to demonstrate how the colony's varied connections and networks shaped the patterns of runaway slaves, especially on the main route to freedom which took runaways to Venezuela. Klooster's inclusion of free blacks and slaves shows the tenacity of connections in the Dutch Atlantic that we might not otherwise have appreciated, and casts Curaçao in a new light, as a place shaped by multiple, parallel, intersecting connections. Klooster's essay is also a salutary reminder of the importance of further study into the experiences of slaves and free people of color in the Dutch Atlantic world.

The terminology of "connections" might suggest a benign interaction that was far from the case. There was, of course, profound asymmetry in many of these relationships. The flight of slaves from Curaçao brings this asymmetry into bold relief. Jews emerge as sinews of the Atlantic, forging connections both across the Atlantic and from one entrepôt to another and playing key

17 See Fatah-Black's essay in this volume.

18 See Morgan's essay in this volume.

19 See their essays in this volume. For another study of foreign merchants in Spain, see Heather Dalton, "Negotiating Fortune: English Merchants in Early Sixteenth-Century Seville," in *Bridging the Early Modern Atlantic World: People, Products, and Practices on the Move*, ed. Caroline A. Williams (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), chapter 2.

20 See also Linda M. Rupert, *Creolization and Contraband: Curaçao in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

roles in commercial exchange. But Jews did so in conditions of legal vulnerability, in which they were forced to assert their rights against those who denied them in order to secure their property. Jessica Roitman's study of Jews in the Dutch and British Atlantic world reveals gaps in legal regimes and political sentiment between centers and peripheries, where metropolitan courts upheld Jewish rights while colonists often tried to undermine them.<sup>21</sup>

A third feature of the Dutch Atlantic world was its decentralization. Ostensibly under Company control, with a clear administrative structure based in the Netherlands, the territories of the Dutch Atlantic also had important local power structures. This gap between preferences expressed by European investors and rulers and what inhabitants of settlements thousands of miles away actually elected to do was hardly unique to the Dutch, of course, nor atypical for the thwarted projection of centralized power in this era. In J.R. McNeill's memorable articulation of this gap between aspiration and reality, "imperial history is the product of metropolitan logic and decisions imperfectly inflicted on people and places poorly understood by the metropolitans."<sup>22</sup> In this volume, for example, Gert Oostindie's work on the Dutch on the "Wild Coast" illustrates that individual officers were able to exert a lot of power. Distance and decentralization and patterns of territorial acquisition likewise contributed to state weakness. In Suriname, Dutch takeover of the English colony in 1667 did not sever the colony's connections to British trading partners, as Karwan Fatah-Black demonstrates. The States of Zeeland, which controlled the colony in those early years, simply did not have the capacity to sever these officially unsanctioned ties in the face of colonists' objections and needs.

For all the Dutch Atlantic's decentralization, of course, states and polities continued to be important in shaping sinews of commerce, international alliances and rivalries, and a range of local attributes. The major states of Western Europe emerge as important to the Dutch Atlantic in different ways and at different times. Consider the simultaneous promulgation of protectionist policies by the French and the English in the middle of the seventeenth century. Both sought to create and enforce monopolies for their own ships, with the result that the Dutch advantage as the main carrier in the Atlantic began to erode. Morgan shows how important state protection was to the development of the British Atlantic economy, and also highlights important intersections with the frequency of warfare. Elsewhere, Roitman has suggested that it

21 See Jessica Vance Roitman, "Creating Confusion in the Colonies: Jews, Citizenship, and the Dutch and British Atlantics," *Itinerario* 36, no. 2 (August 2012): 55–90.

22 J.R. McNeill, *Atlantic Empires of France and Spain: Louisbourg and Havana, 1700–1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), xvi.

mattered whether Jews lived under English or Dutch rule, and whether the state acted to protect their rights. She also focuses our attention on citizenship and the many different forms citizenship could take.<sup>23</sup> The example of the Jews points to the legal and administrative structures that circumscribed people's lives in the Western Atlantic. Roitman and Ben-Ur's study of adultery within the Jewish communities in Suriname, Curaçao, and Amsterdam reveals three legal systems at work: colonial, metropolitan, and that of the Jewish community itself.<sup>24</sup>

Fourth, thinking about the Atlantic world through the prism of the Dutch experience offers a variety of new geographical perspectives. In the seventeenth century, the Dutch were a real Atlantic power: they had trading posts and settlements and diplomatic ties and whaling enterprises and territory in all four quadrants of the Atlantic. In the depth and breadth of their activity, the Dutch were unlike any other European state. The Portuguese came closest, with their exploitation of the fisheries giving them a claim to a similarly pan-Atlantic empire. Moreover, when we consider the Dutch and the Portuguese and their experiences in the Atlantic, Africa comes to the fore. Indeed, it is the starting point for thinking about Portuguese activity in the Atlantic, and for the Dutch, the trading posts of the gold coast were also valuable. Might an Atlantic history with themes drawn from Dutch and Portuguese experiences give us a way to rethink what the Atlantic world looks like with Africa fully incorporated?

A second geographic dimension that the Dutch bring to a reconceptualized Atlantic history is the relationship between Atlantic and global history. As global and transnational approaches have become increasingly popular among historians, it has become challenging for historians to distinguish the regional from the global and to set the regional in global context. At the same time, transnational approaches offer an exciting intellectual opportunity to revisit important events and processes in global contexts.<sup>25</sup> The problematic category of the "Atlantic" is nicely showcased in Schmidt's essay. Schmidt argues that for the Dutch we might be better served in thinking of the world beyond Europe, not specifically the Atlantic, since the Dutch seem to have been particularly active in creating an exotic world for Europeans to purchase – selling, as Post

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23 Roitman, "Creating Confusion in the Colonies."

24 See their essay in this volume.

25 For an example of global approaches to formerly national or regional stories, see David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007); and David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760–1840* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

did, an exotische. Some notable recent works focused on the Atlantic world have included chapters on global history, as did the second edition of the *British Atlantic World* in 2009.<sup>26</sup> Here the Dutch may offer a salutary example.

Transnational themes have special salience for the Dutch, with their global enterprises in this era, and in light of their greater financial success in the East Indies. There are some interesting points of contrast and connection to the world of the Dutch East Indies. Dutch men did not, it seems, take indigenous women as wives and sexual partners in the West Indies to the extent they did in the East Indies.<sup>27</sup> Roitman and Ben-Ur, however, point to the importance of mixed race people in Curaçao and Suriname, and to the existence of Creole populations who resembled the population of places such as Batavia. Their essay suggests that closer examination of sexual and domestic relations in the Dutch Atlantic might offer new points for comparison.

One final geographic question remains: *Where* is the Dutch Atlantic? The editors limited the Dutch Atlantic to places controlled by the WIC. The editors make a case for what is excluded in this volume, both in terms of chronology (for the most part, the era before 1680) and geography (the Cape, North America, the fisheries). The Dutch Atlantic that emerges in this volume contains places that were Dutch-controlled ports with tiny Dutch populations who spoke other European languages or creoles as important sites in the Dutch Atlantic. At the same time, however, the editors excluded places with vastly larger Dutch and Dutch-descended populations, such as New York (North America contained some 100,000 people of Dutch descent by 1789) or the Cape Colony. These essays leave us with the challenge of trying to think about aspects of Dutch culture in the Atlantic without examining those parts of the Atlantic where Dutch family migration might have permitted more components of Dutch culture to survive. Considering places where people *did* speak Dutch, for example, might help shed light on the cultural patterns and power dynamics at work in those many locales in the Dutch Atlantic world where

26 For some recent approaches to this issue, see “WMQ Forum: Beyond the Atlantic”; Nicholas Canny, “Atlantic History and Global History,” in *Atlantic History*, ed. Greene and Morgan, chapter 12; Peter Coclanis, “Beyond Atlantic History,” in *Atlantic History*, ed. Greene and Morgan, chapter 13; Emma Rothschild, “Late Atlantic History,” in *Oxford Handbook*, ed. Canny and Morgan, chapter 37; Lauren Benton, “The Atlantic in Global Perspective,” in *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800*, ed. Armitage and Braddick, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 271–299.

27 Two good starting points for the mestizo world of the Dutch East Indies are Leonard Blussé, *Bitter Bonds: A Colonial Divorce Drama of the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2002); and Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia: Europeans and Eurasians in Colonial Indonesia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

inhabitants spoke other languages. Dutch whaling and fishing activities, moreover, might offer more good opportunities to consider intercultural interactions, since the North Atlantic fisheries were often multinational places.

The Dutch were also essential to the workings of other empires and their own Atlantic circuits. Marzagalli's essay raises the tantalizing question of whether it might be beneficial to think of Bordeaux as a Dutch nodal point. If the Dutch were important to foreign ports and places, so, too, were non-Dutch places essential to the development of the Dutch Atlantic. Numerous contributions in this volume, for example, suggest that Barbados played an important role in the development of Dutch settlements, as did the North American mainland. Dutch settlements such as Suriname might likewise be considered as extensions of the English Atlantic, at least in terms of the dependence of Suriname on North American shipping.

To be sure, this volume is not exhaustive, nor indeed was it intended to be. The work has a specific geography, chronology, goal, and focus. In these respects, a variety of topics are not included here which one imagines are also important to the history of the Dutch Atlantic. The themes of the volume ended up privileging Europeans and European activity in the Atlantic world, and thus slaves and slavery and indigenous people do not receive as much attention as one might have anticipated. The chronology of the project, emphasizing the period after 1680, means that we hear less about the Dutch Atlantic at war than we might have if the period of the three Anglo-Dutch wars had been included more fully.<sup>28</sup> These wars were essential in recalibrating the balance between the English and the Dutch, and in reallocating territory – in creating, in short, the geographic terrain of the Dutch Atlantic as it existed in 1680. The seventeenth century was also important in shaping how the Dutch became participants in the Atlantic. Christian Koot argues that the Dutch sought to benefit from English knowledge and expertise, permitting English soldiers to leave their positions with Dutch forces in order to serve as Virginia governors, on the expectation that they would profit from this arrangement. This seventeenth-century history is more than a backdrop; it was formative to the characteristics of the Dutch Atlantic as they had matured by 1680.

Another important subject that receives short shrift in this volume is religion. The absence is conspicuous largely because it is so difficult to imagine studying some of the other imperial Atlantics without looking at the importance of European religions in their development and in their self-images – the French, the Spanish, the British, the Portuguese – both as something shared by Europeans and European Creoles and something that was part of

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28 See Christian Koot's essay in this volume.

how some Europeans interacted with non-European people. Evangelical missions yoked to commercial enterprises, conquests, and occupations gave different expanding kingdoms distinctive modes of cultural interaction through religious languages, symbols, and beliefs.<sup>29</sup> Religious affiliation came for some to be markers of identity. For the British, for example, Protestantism became an important expression of ethnic, national, and ultimately imperial identity, even if there were English Catholics throughout the Atlantic.<sup>30</sup> Confessional identities also served Protestants and Catholics as a language of difference and a justification for aggression, seen most vividly in the emergence of the “Black Legend” during the Dutch revolt, and in the importance of Northern European Protestant claims to liberate Amerindians from conversion to Catholicism.<sup>31</sup> The Puritan-dominated Massachusetts Bay Company took this message to heart, placing an Indian at the center of their company seal, with the words “Come over and help us” contained in the cartouche around his head.<sup>32</sup>

The absence of attention to religion in the Dutch world in these essays, with the notable exception of Ben-Ur and Roitman’s contribution, is striking, in light of the attention paid by scholars to religion, and especially toleration, in the Dutch Republic. Intimations of religious cultures, of the important way religious beliefs and institutions tightened sinews linking far-flung places in the Atlantic, and of how people drew on religious beliefs and communities to devise new cultural forms and practices around the Atlantic appear in these essays. But overall, the relative paucity of attention to religion in this volume points to one important area for historians to explore.<sup>33</sup>

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29 For a comparison of some of these evangelical projects, see James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Early North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

30 On the importance of Protestantism to the British Atlantic world, see Carla Gardina Pestana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); on the presence and significance of English Catholics, see Shona Helen Johnston, *Papists in a Protestant World: The Catholic Anglo-Atlantic in the Seventeenth Century* (unpublished PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2011).

31 On the connection between the Dutch revolt and the Black Legend, see Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570–1670* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), chapter 2.

32 On the seal, see Kristina Bross, “‘Come Over and Help Us’: Reading Mission Literature,” *Early American Literature* 38, no. 3 (2003): 395–400.

33 See Danny Noorlander, “Serving God and Mammon: The Reformed Church and the Dutch West India Company in the Atlantic World, 1621–1674” (unpublished PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2011).

A final subject of considerable importance for the history of the Dutch Republic but barely visible in the history of the Dutch Atlantic is environmental history. In contrast, important interpretations of Netherlands society, culture, and politics place environmental history, specifically the cooperation essential to water management, at the heart of a particular kind of egalitarian and cooperative society.<sup>34</sup> Economic and social structures and racial hierarchies in Dutch colonies, settlements, and port towns in the western Atlantic point to dramatically different patterns than those that prevailed in the Netherlands. How, if at all, did environmental features affect these patterns?

The subject of environmental history is relatively new for Atlantic history, but the Dutch Atlantic seems to be a promising subject for historians to investigate.<sup>35</sup> Experts at modifying their environment, turning sea into dry land, marsh into arable field, and flood-prone regions into safe havens through aggressive engineering, the Dutch were the consummate innovators and engineers. An emphasis on their commercial acumen and their important role in the carrying trades of the Atlantic has shifted attention away from settlement and agricultural activity, but there are indications that the Dutch in the Atlantic deployed the same strategies of draining land to create polders and irrigating to improve cultivation which they had developed at home. When the Dutch seized Suriname from the English in 1667, for example, the geographic center of habitation and cultivation shifted. The English had lived up the region's four main rivers. The more fertile land downstream was too wet for the English to farm. The Dutch, however, brought their expertise to bear on this predicament. They used systems of dikes and canals to put swampy coastal lands into cultivation, creating polders after 1700 and ultimately shifting all plantation activity to the coastal areas after 1740.<sup>36</sup> Dutch occupation changed settlement patterns and agricultural activity in the colony, altering the region's environment.

The potential Suriname's history offers for innovative environmental interpretations is also suggested in a 1995 essay by Gert Oostindie and Alex van Stipriaan on slavery in "hydraulic" societies, by which they mean societies defined by the ubiquity of water, both that redirected for plantation use and

34 See most recently Maarten Prak and Jan Luiten van Zanden, *Nederland en het poldermodel: Sociaal-economische geschiedenis van Nederland, 1000–2000* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2013).

35 See J.R. McNeill, "The Ecological Atlantic," in *Oxford Handbook*, ed. Canny and Morgan, chapter 17.

36 Peter Boomgaard, "The Tropical Rain Forests of Suriname: Exploitation and Management 1600–1975," *New West Indian Guide* 66, nos. 3–4 (1992): 211–212; Radjinarain Mohanpersad Nannan Panday, *Agriculture in Surinam 1650–1950: An Inquiry into the Causes of its Decline* (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1959), 15–17.



free-flowing water itself. They argue that hydraulic aspects should be considered when understanding the demography of a given slave population. Moreover, they depict numerous ways in which living in a water-dominated environment affected cultural features including language, religion, and music.<sup>37</sup> These glimpses at Suriname's environmental history suggest that there might well be an environmental history of the Dutch Atlantic waiting to be written: one that encompasses agricultural, commercial, and maritime activities and that builds on and extends the important history of people and the environment in the Netherlands.

Many features of the Dutch Atlantic world as depicted in this volume coincide neatly with current interests in "entangled" Atlantics – looking at interactions across borders, engaging in multilingual research. Such an approach renders the Atlantic by necessity more polyglot and, sometimes, more heterogeneous; it brings into focus boundary crossers and middlemen, statuses long believed to be Dutch specializations. But there is a risk in emphasizing these qualities too much. Historians of colonial British North America might recognize a pattern from their own field, once dominated by the study of the puritans of New England; when interests shifted to the planters, servants, and slaves of the tobacco Chesapeake (in the 1970s) and then to the polyglot, religiously diverse, mixed European inhabitants of the so-called "Middle Colonies" of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware in the 1980s, historians argued in turn for the importance of the regions they studied by boasting that region was the source of important attributes (liberalism, racism, tolerance, pluralism, democracy, take your pick) of modern American society, or that one particular region was "normative" in terms of American development.<sup>38</sup> Each region, its proponents argued at different times, spoke to a larger American experience, and historians projected onto U.S. history as a whole the qualities of their own region of interest. But interests change; ideas about what the attributes of U.S. history were and are continue to be as hotly debated as ever. So, too, perhaps, with the Atlantic world. Right now, transnational history and entanglement are the rage, putting cross-cultural interactions at the center of historical analysis, and making Atlantic history look very "Dutch," but these trends are not likely to endure forever.

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37 Gert Oostindie and Alex van Stipriaan, "Slavery and Slave Cultures in a Hydraulic Society: Suriname," in *Slave Cultures and the Cultures of Slavery*, ed. Stephen Palmié (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), chapter 7.

38 On this question of which region was "normative" see Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

This thought-provoking volume on the Dutch Atlantic invites us to think more deeply about the varied nature of the Atlantic, its many different cultures, populations, economies, labor regimes, domestic arrangements, and any number of other features. Roitman and Oostindie hoped as part of their investigation to demonstrate the significance of the Dutch Atlantic for the Netherlands, and many of these essays suggest important repercussions. Yet in terms of setting and occasionally modeling future research agendas, the Dutch Atlantic might be even more important to Atlantic history than it is to the history of the Netherlands. A study of the Dutch in the Atlantic world reveals just the kind of Atlantic history that people have been calling for – entangled, international, multilingual, networked, connected. If on the one hand we might have envisioned a book on the Dutch Atlantic in 2002, when the *British Atlantic* volume appeared, on the other hand what we will end up with is a series of books on the Dutch Atlantic in 2014 and beyond which will sketch what the future of Atlantic history can be. And that future, it turns out, looks Dutch.



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